



THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER

Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS

YVES SENTE • ANDRÉ JUILLARD

THE TESTAMENT OF WILLIAM S.



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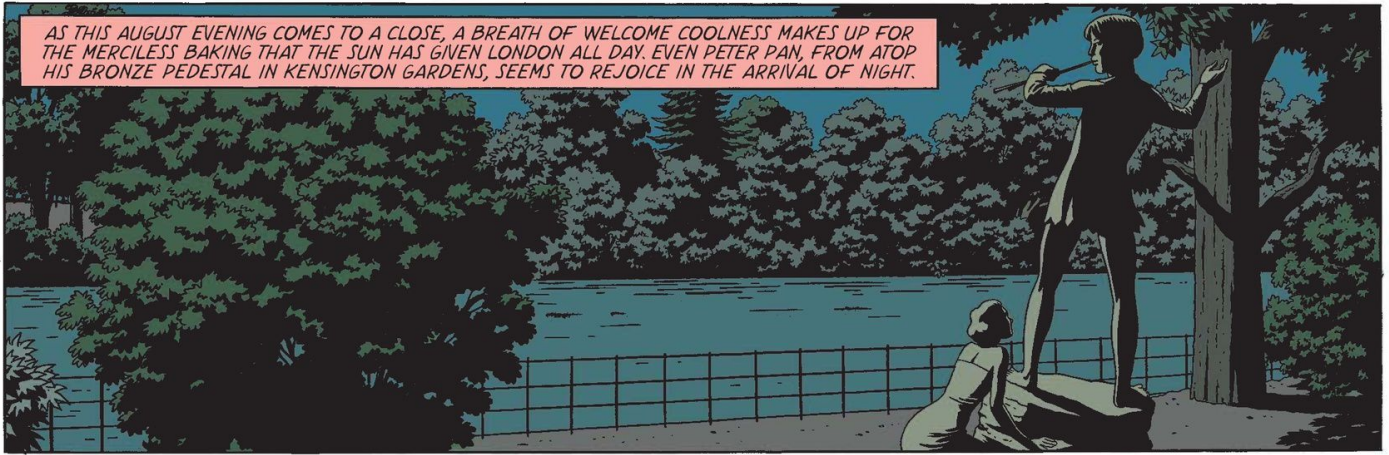
THE TESTAMENT OF WILLIAM S.

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AS THIS AUGUST EVENING COMES TO A CLOSE, A BREATH OF WELCOME COOLNESS MAKES UP FOR THE MERCILESS BAKING THAT THE SUN HAS GIVEN LONDON ALL DAY. EVEN PETER PAN, FROM ATOP HIS BRONZE PEDESTAL IN KENSINGTON GARDENS, SEEMS TO REJOICE IN THE ARRIVAL OF NIGHT.



NOT FAR FROM THERE IN BAYSWATER ROAD, MEMBERS OF THE LONDON DIPLOMATIC SOCIETY ARE TAKING LEAVE OF EACH OTHER AFTER CELEBRATING THE ARRIVAL OF THEIR NEW GERMAN COLLEAGUE.

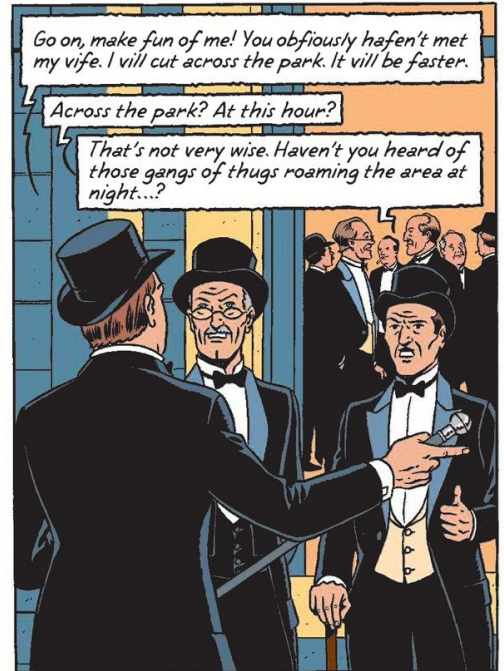
Donnerwetter! * This is a velcome party I won't forget in a hurry!



I did not realise how late it vas! I am goink to get a good ... a good... Ach! How do you say...?

It's 'a good telling-off', Hans.

My poor friend! Has the much-vaunted German authority fallen so low, then?



Go on, make fun of me! You obfiously hafent met my wife. I vill cut across the park. It vill be faster.

Across the park? At this hour?

That's not very wise. Haven't you heard of those gangs of thugs roaming the area at night...?

*BY THUNDER!



War? * Do you mean those ... those... Ach! Vat are they called again? I definitely drank too much, my friends...

They're called 'Teddy boys'. lalle hoodlums with no respect for anyone or anything. You should be careful.



Pfff! A handful of scally-vags dressed like girls aren't goink to scare me more than my wife! Let them come!

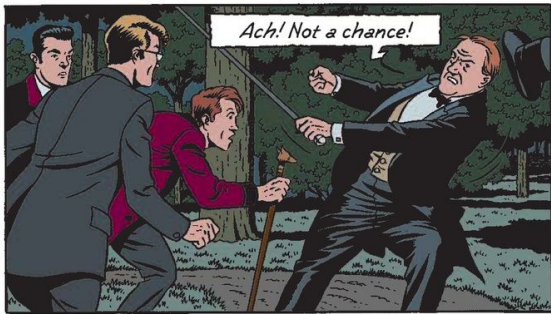


♪ Pom Pom Pom



Hello there, daddy-o! Are you lost? We'll be nice and show you the way out ... for the contents of your wallet. And your hat - I like that too...

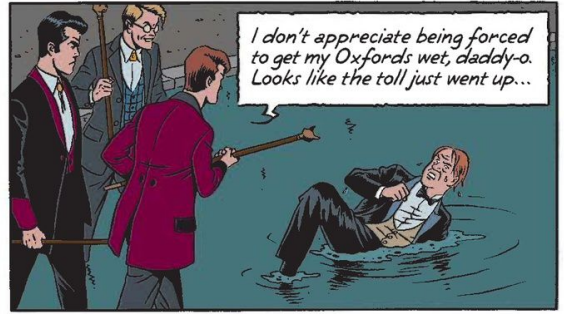
*WHAT?



Ach! Not a chance!



After him!



I don't appreciate being forced to get my Oxfords wet, daddy-o. Looks like the toll just went up...



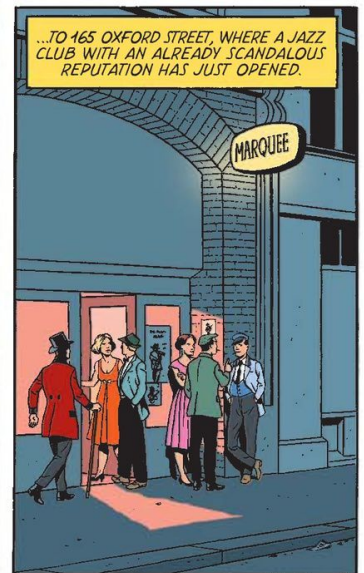
All right, he's had it. Let's scatter. Meet me at the usual place tomorrow. I'll have new tip-offs.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER, THE GANG LEADER EXITS THE TUBE AT OXFORD CIRCUS...



...AND CONTINUES ON FOOT...



...TO 165 OXFORD STREET, WHERE A JAZZ CLUB WITH AN ALREADY SCANDALOUS REPUTATION HAS JUST OPENED.



Come here, Dickie! Just in time - we're skint!

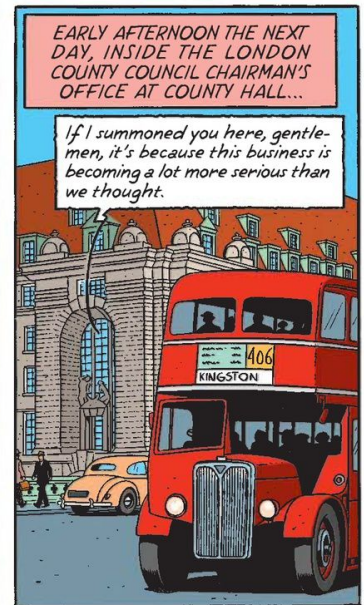


Is this all you're bringing back when I tipped you off about a party full of defenceless old diplomats?! Is this a joke?

Don't be mad at us, my lord. They've increased the number of patrols, and the bourgeoisie are starting to be wary around Notting Hill...

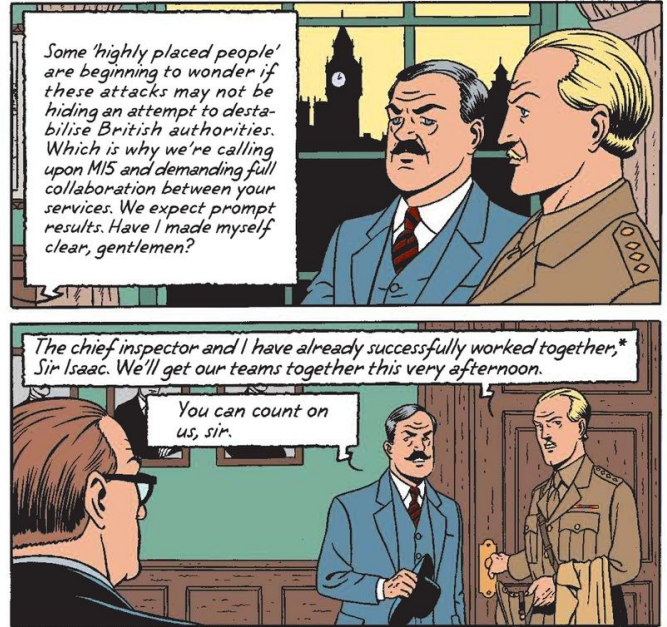
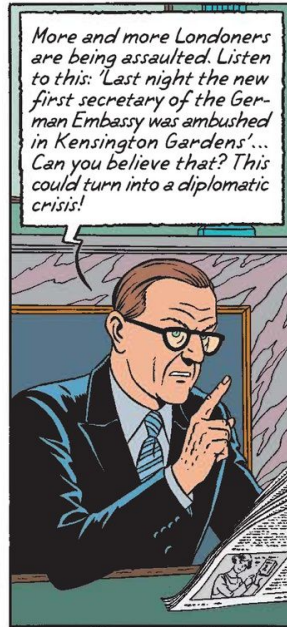


More excuses! Out of my sight! I'll contact you when I have something more within your reach.

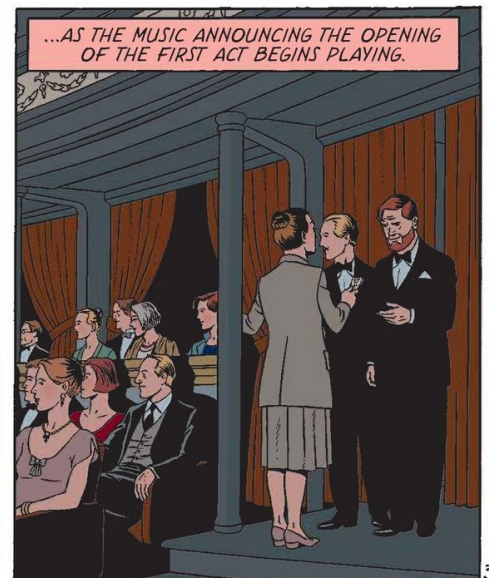
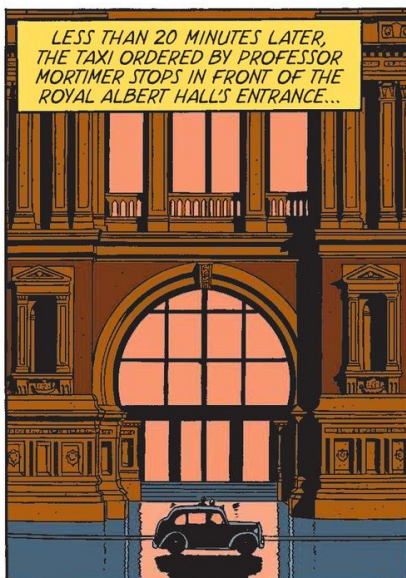
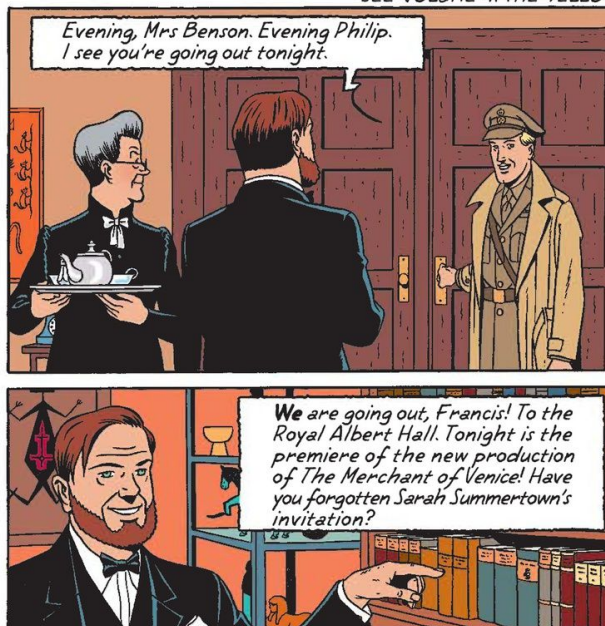


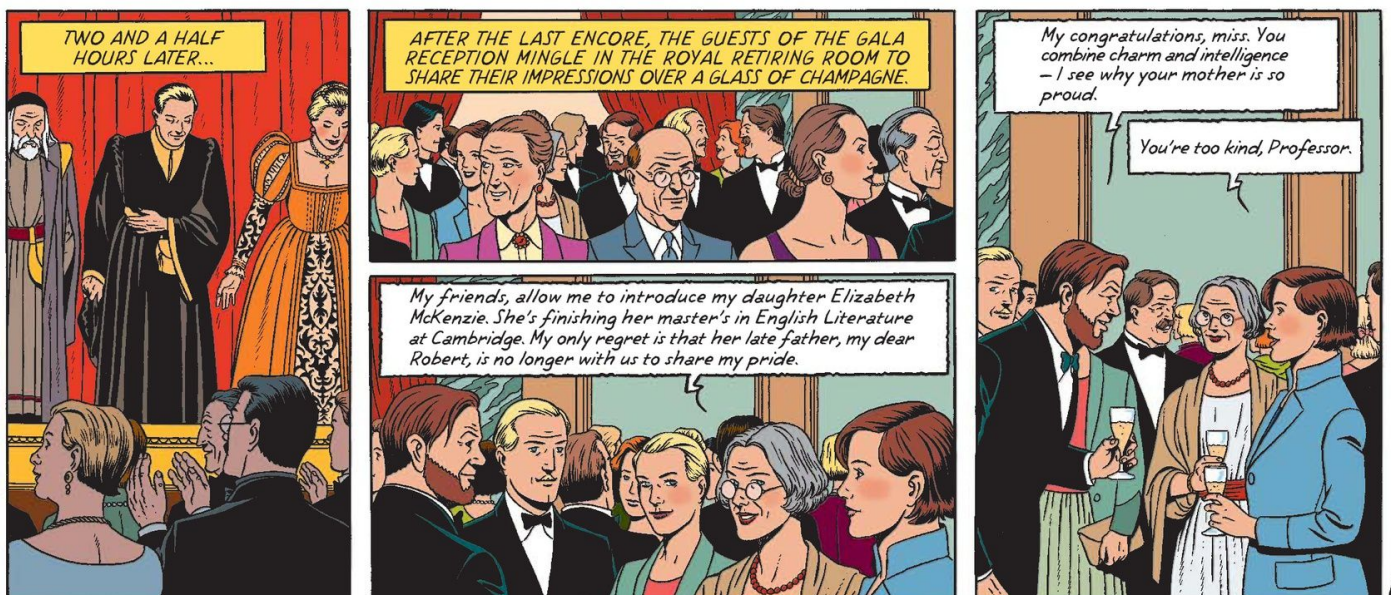
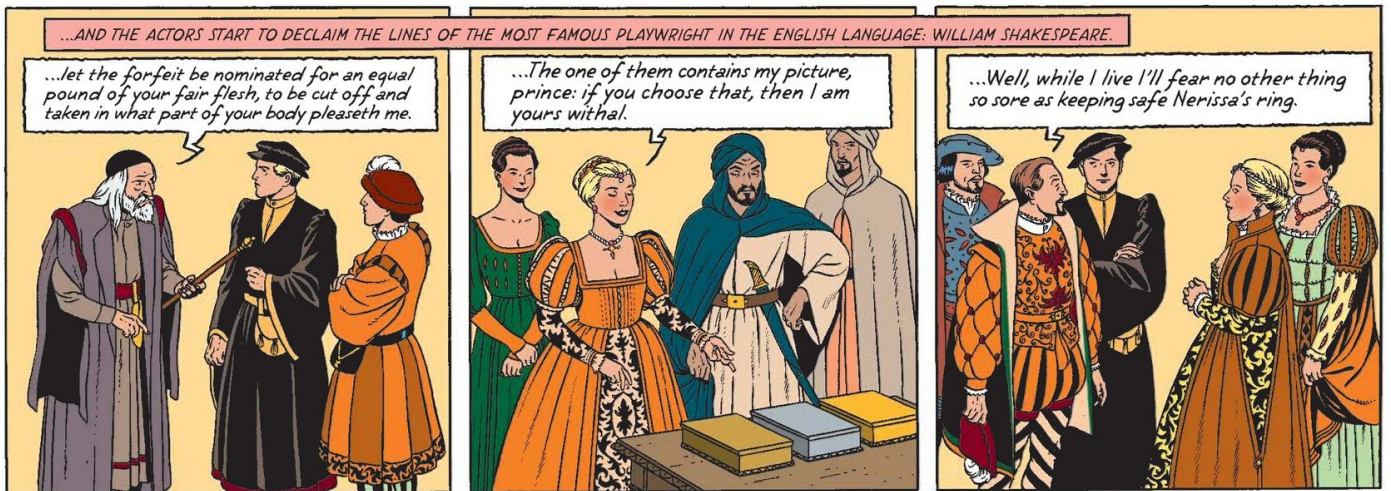
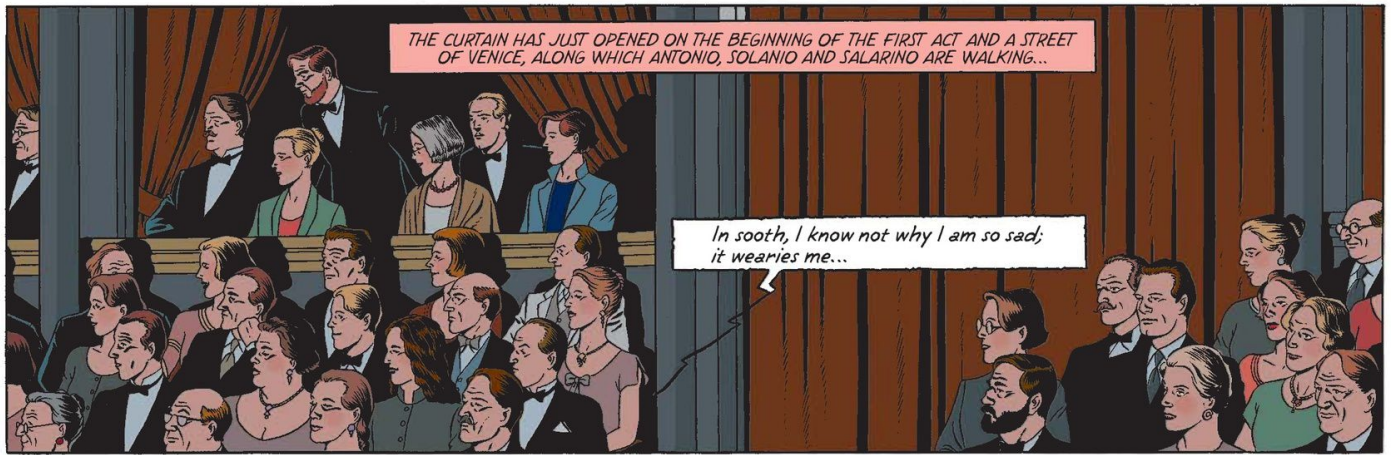
EARLY AFTERNOON THE NEXT DAY, INSIDE THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE AT COUNTY HALL...

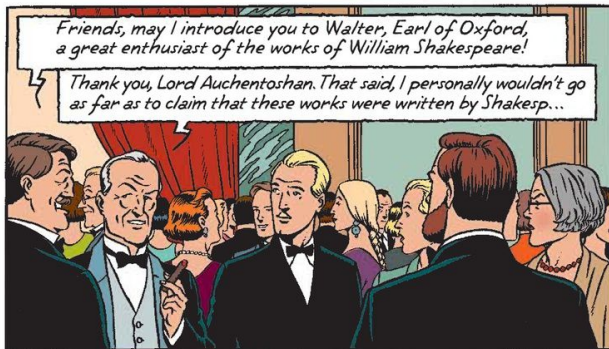
If I summoned you here, gentlemen, it's because this business is becoming a lot more serious than we thought.



*SEE VOLUME 4: THE YELLOW M







Friends, may I introduce you to Walter, Earl of Oxford, a great enthusiast of the works of William Shakespeare!

Thank you, Lord Auchentoshan. That said, I personally wouldn't go as far as to claim that these works were written by Shakesp...



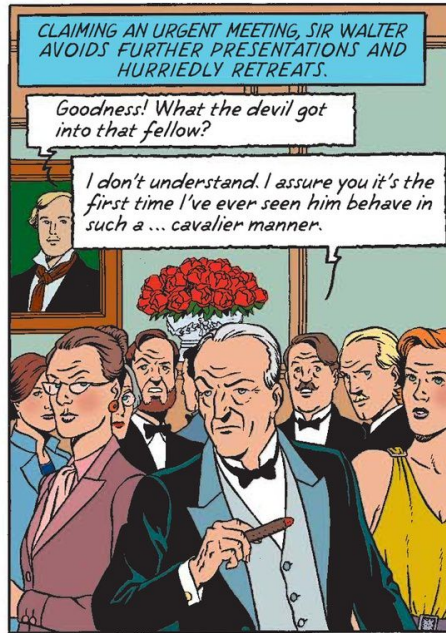
SUDDENLY SIR WALTER SEEMS TO FREEZE AS HE DISCOVERS THE PRESENCE OF SARAH SUMMERTOWN.

Sir Walter?!



SARAH POLITELY OFFERS HER HAND TO SIR WALTER UNDER THE WARY EYES OF HER FRIENDS, AS THE EARL AND THE NOVELIST ARE BOTH OBVIOUSLY ILL AT EASE.

Mrs Summertown... How do you do? How do you do?



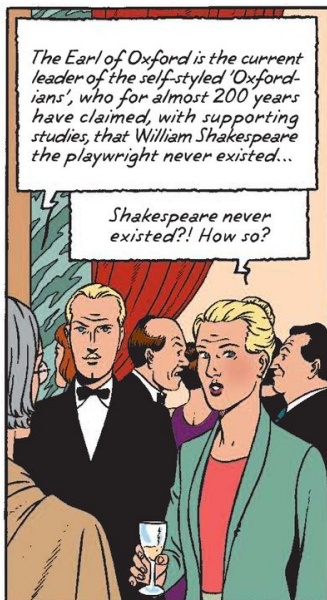
CLAIMING AN URGENT MEETING, SIR WALTER AVOIDS FURTHER PRESENTATIONS AND HURRIEDLY RETREATS.

Goodness! What the devil got into that fellow?

I don't understand. I assure you it's the first time I've ever seen him behave in such a ... cavalier manner.

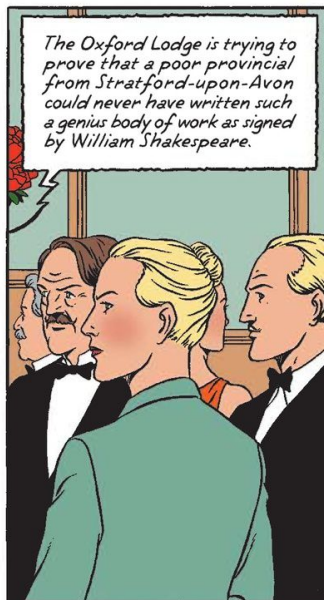


It's not your fault, my dear. Much against my will, I happen to be the sole cause of this ridiculous situation.



The Earl of Oxford is the current leader of the self-styled 'Oxfordians', who for almost 200 years have claimed, with supporting studies, that William Shakespeare the playwright never existed...

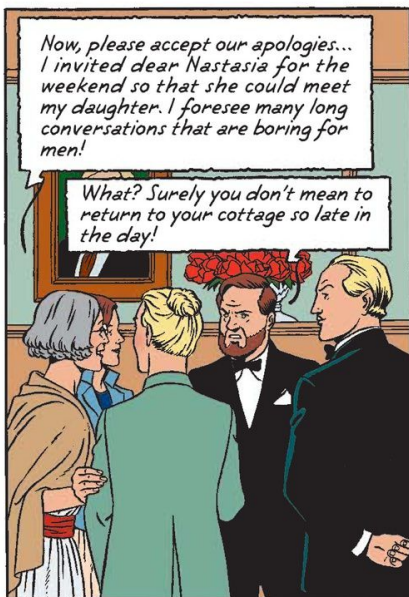
Shakespeare never existed?! How so?



The Oxford Lodge is trying to prove that a poor provincial from Stratford-upon-Avon could never have written such a genius body of work as signed by William Shakespeare.



I, on the other hand, happen to be the president of the William Shakespeare Defenders' Society - its great rival - whose goal is to keep those very works alive ... and defend their creator's honour! As you can imagine, the Earl doesn't like me very much...

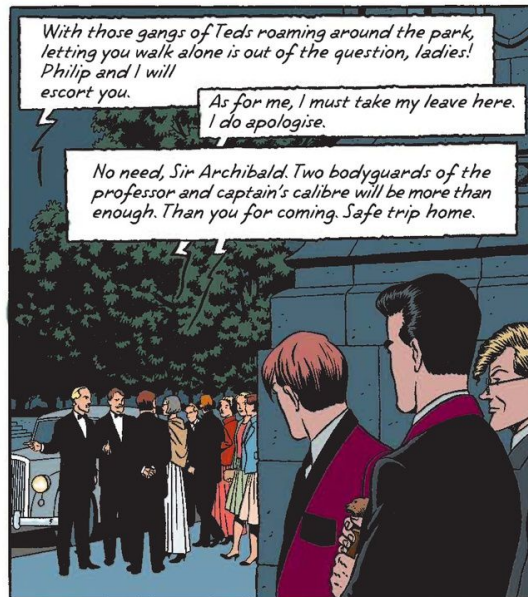


Now, please accept our apologies... I invited dear Nastasia for the weekend so that she could meet my daughter. I foresee many long conversations that are boring for men!

What? Surely you don't mean to return to your cottage so late in the day!



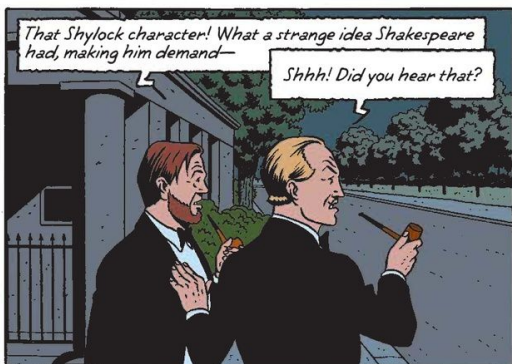
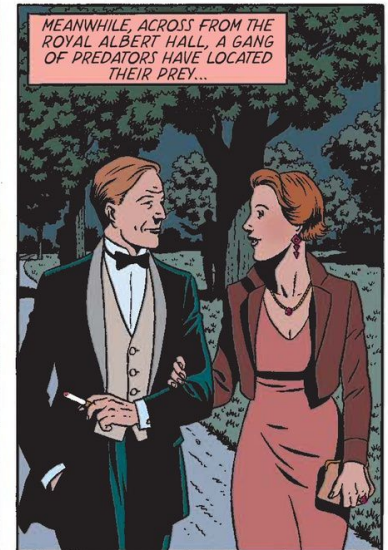
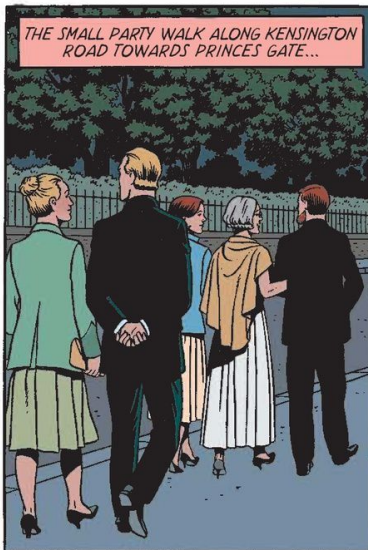
No, don't worry. Actually I stay in accommodation above our Society's offices. It's not far from here, in Princes Gate. A short walk in the fresh air will do us good after all this entertainment.



With those gangs of Teds roaming around the park, letting you walk alone is out of the question, ladies! Philip and I will escort you.

As for me, I must take my leave here. I do apologise.

No need, Sir Archibald. Two bodyguards of the professor and captain's calibre will be more than enough. Than you for coming. Safe trip home.

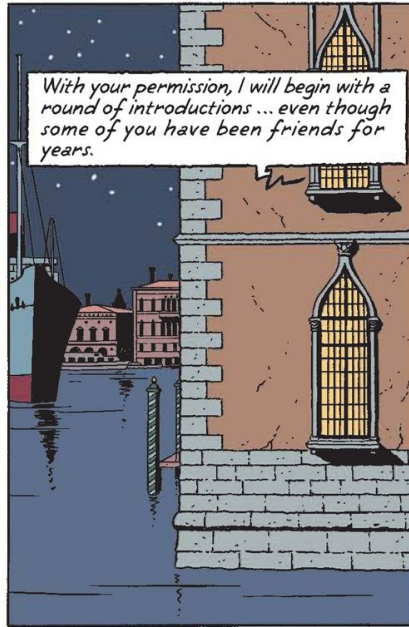






A LITTLE EARLIER THAT SAME EVENING, IN VENICE, A RECEPTION WAS HELD AT THE HOME OF THE MARQUIS STEFANO DA SPIRI.

Welcome, dear friends. I am delighted to have you as my guests here, in this family palace that has seen so many noble visitors over the centuries.



With your permission, I will begin with a round of introductions ... even though some of you have been friends for years.



To my right, my American friend Peggy Newgold. Next to her, Sir Russell Winson and his wife Lady Penelope, who have come for the screening of their new film at la Mostra.*



So you managed to avoid the air traffic controllers' strike?

Barely! Our flight was the last one to leave London.



To the right of Lady Penelope, Earl Arthur and Countess Abigail of Chatham – I believe you all know them.



Maria Vergine!*** What are you doing?! We're going to hit! Hard to starboard!!!

I... I can't, Captain! The helm's not responding...



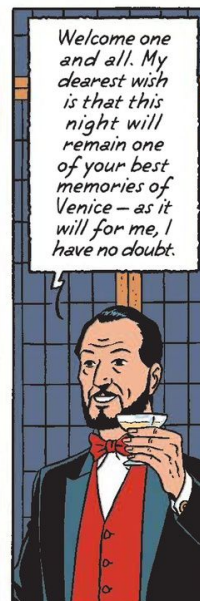
However, not all of you have met my friend Marcello Lamberti, a brilliant jeweller and watchmaker, and his charming wife Clara, a pianist.



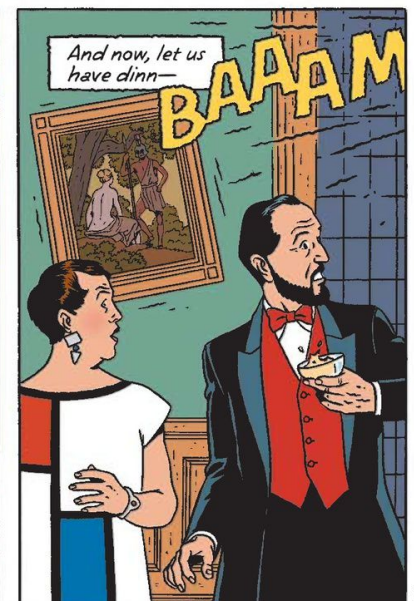
Engines at full reverse to soften the blow! Brace for impact!



And finally, my friends Karl and Eva von Richentaus. They too came to attend the film festival ... before going to enjoy a second honeymoon in Tuscany.



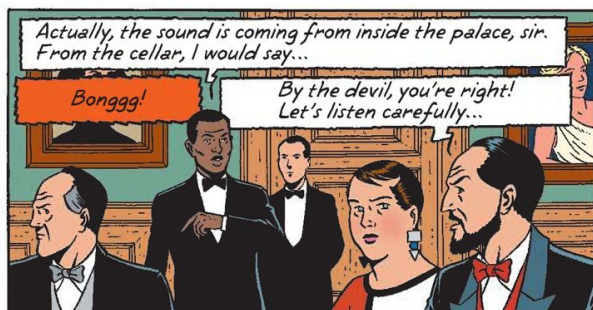
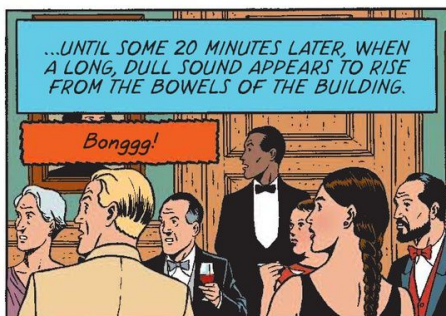
Welcome one and all. My dearest wish is that this night will remain one of your best memories of Venice – as it will for me, I have no doubt.



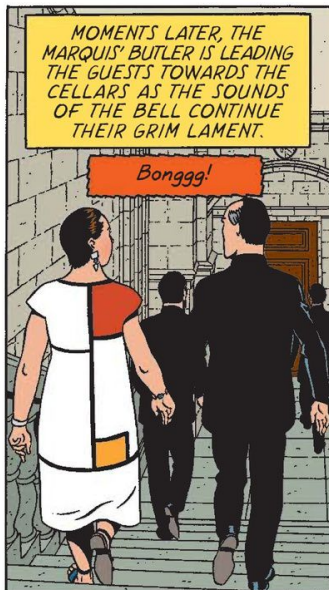
And now, let us have dinn—

BAAAAM

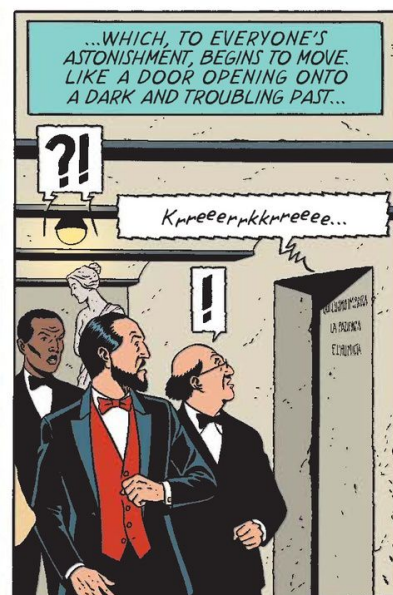
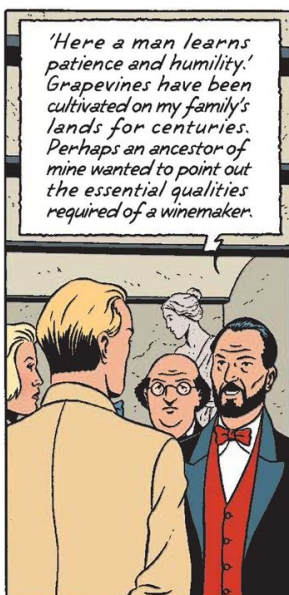
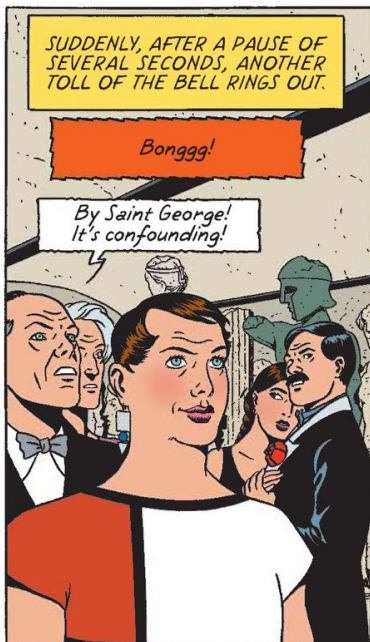
*LA MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA – VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL. FOUNDED IN 1932, IT IS THE OLDEST IN THE WORLD.
**GOOD HEAVENS!



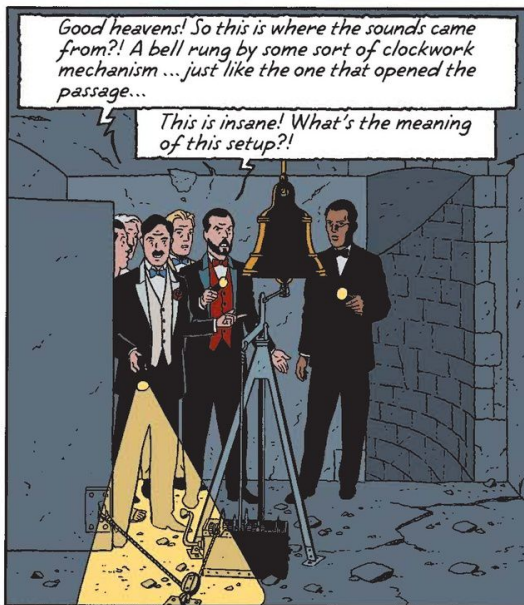
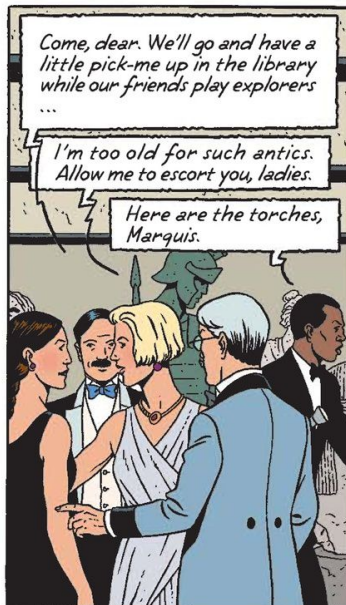
*CARNEVALE DI VENEZIA – CARNIVAL OF VENICE. AN ANNUAL FESTIVAL FAMOUS FOR ITS ELABORATE COSTUMES AND MASKS.

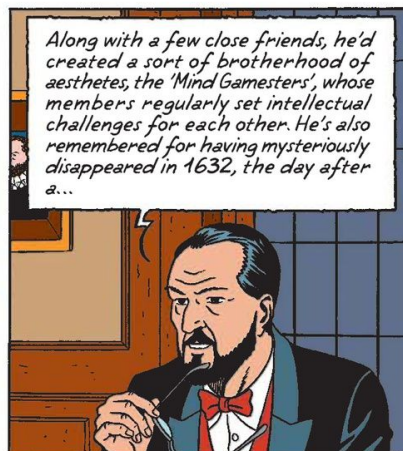
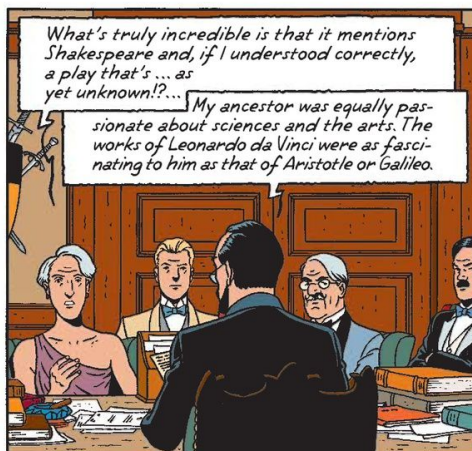
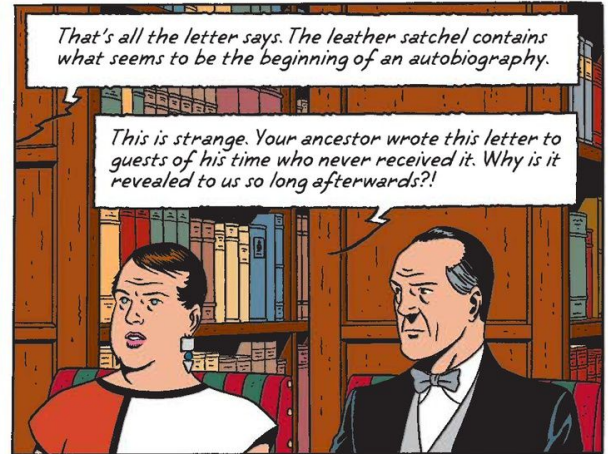
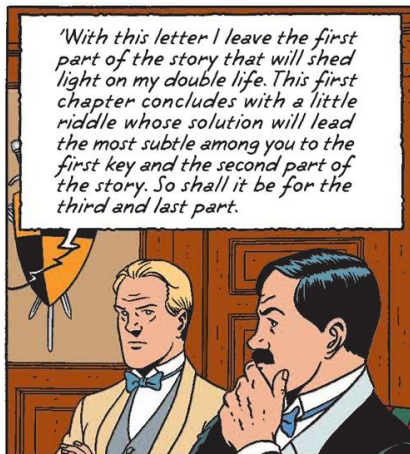
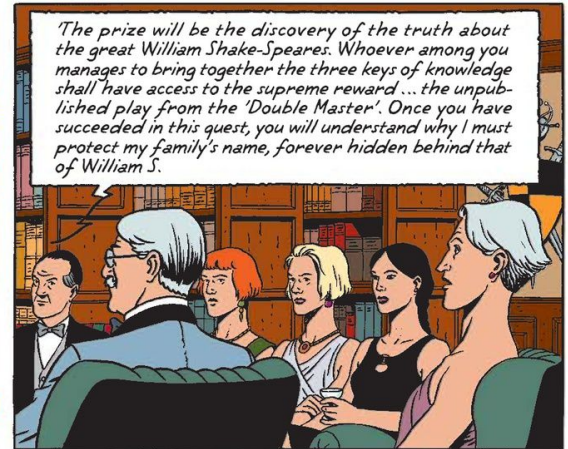
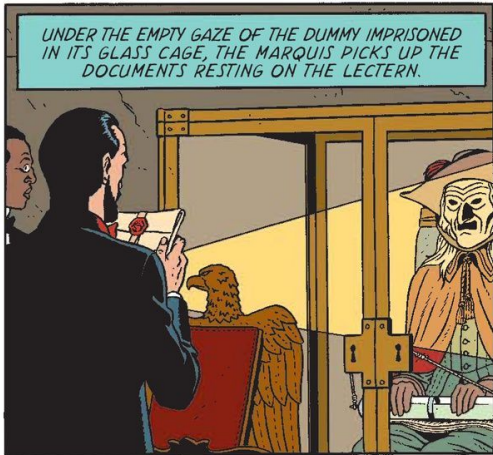


*MY DEAR



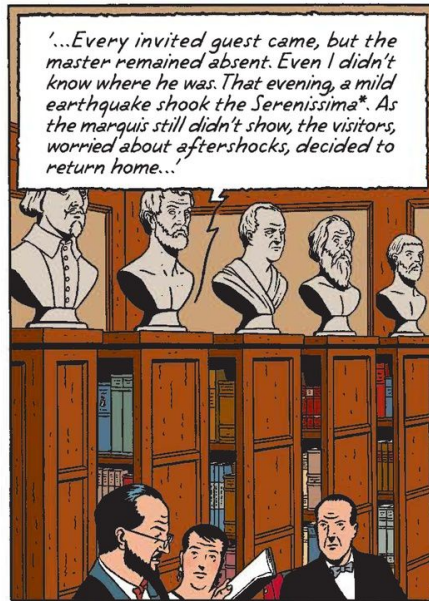
*TRADITIONALLY, FRENCH THEATRES ANNOUNCE THE BEGINNING OF A PERFORMANCE WITH A SERIES (OFTEN NINE) OF SHARP RAPS OF A WOODEN STAFF ONTO THE STAGE, ENDING IN THREE SLOWER ONES JUST BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES.
 **EXCELLENCY, MY LORD...







Yes, that's it! The testimony of my ancestor's butler. He recounts how, that evening of 1632, Guglielmo da Spiri had invited the members of his brotherhood to a sumptuous feast here, in this very palace.



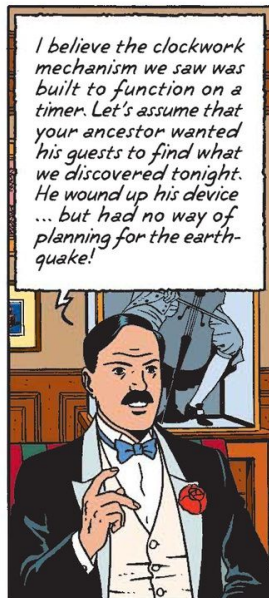
'...Every invited guest came, but the master remained absent. Even I didn't know where he was. That evening, a mild earthquake shook the Serenissima*. As the marquis still didn't show, the visitors, worried about aftershocks, decided to return home...



'...and no one ever heard from Marquis Guglielmo da Spiri again.'

An earthquake, you say? In that case, I may have an idea about what happened...

*A NAME FOR THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC, MEANING THE MOST SERENE.



I believe the clockwork mechanism we saw was built to function on a timer. Let's assume that your ancestor wanted his guests to find what we discovered tonight. He wound up his device ... but had no way of planning for the earthquake!



The tremor probably caused minute rock falls that blocked the mechanism...

...and the shock caused by the ship colliding with the palace tonight released it—over three centuries later?!



Why not? The mechanism seemed to be ingenious and built with quality materials, which, in an atmosphere preserved from damp, wouldn't have degraded over the centuries.

It sounds like we have a technical explanation. That leaves one question: what shall we do with that 'testament'?



We need to find a specialist on Shakespeare...

The name Sarah Summertown springs to mind. She's president of the William Shakespeare Defenders' Society, and I often consult with her when one of my films makes a reference to Shakespeare.

Sarah Summer...!?



What was her name again?



Sarah Summertown. Archaeologist, novelist and something of an adventurer. The press mentioned her recently after she returned from Africa.

I think I read something about that, yes...



It's an excellent suggestion, Sir Russell. Could you call her tomorrow? You can explain the situation and tell her that I will be sending my butler. Salman will bring her these new documents in person.

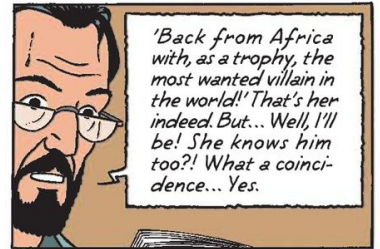
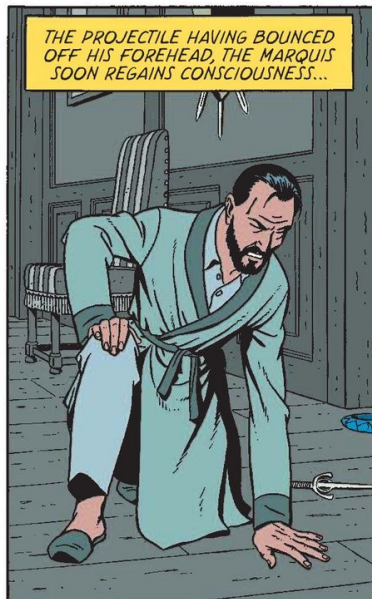


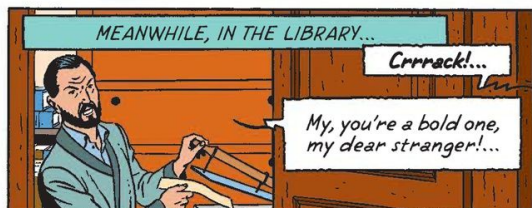
I insist on being informed of the outcome of this adventure, my dear!

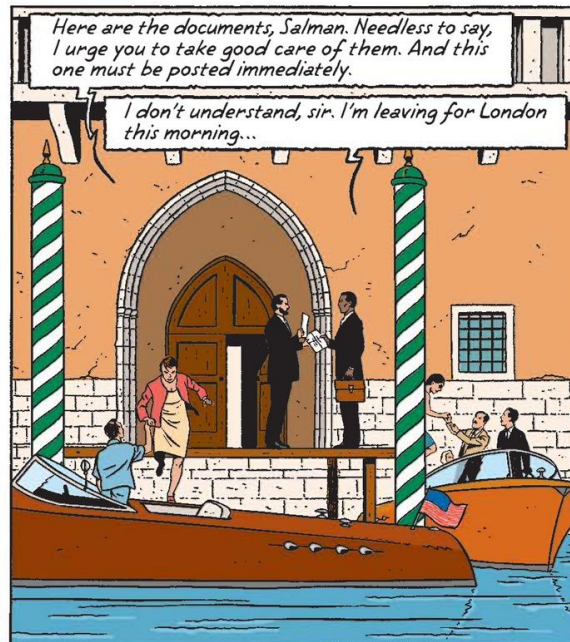
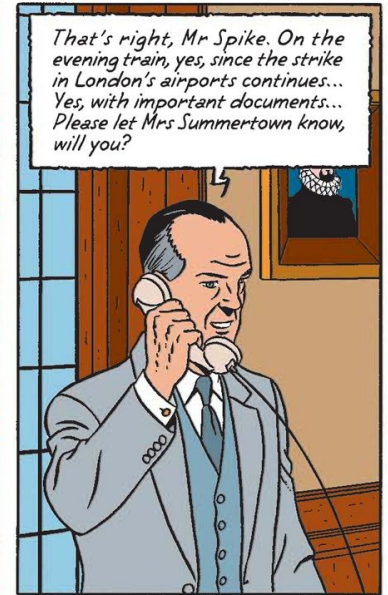
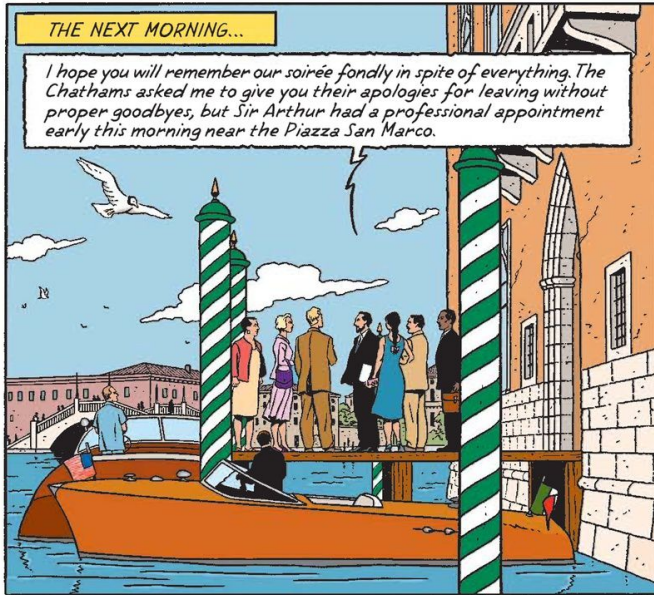
So do I!



I promise, my friends. For the moment, though, I believe we have all had enough excitement. These documents are going to spend the night in this desk, and we ... in our beds! My people will show you to your rooms. Goodnight, all.

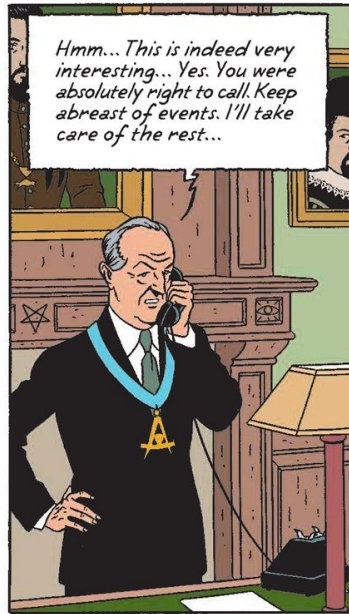








I'm listening, Brother De Vere...

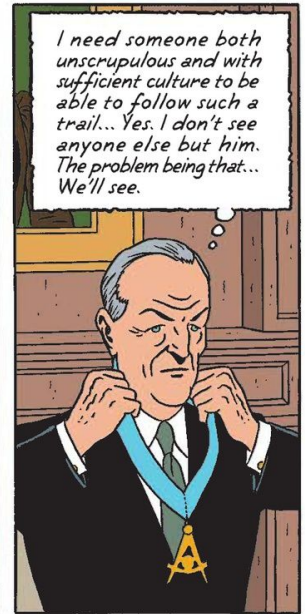


Hmm... This is indeed very interesting... Yes. You were absolutely right to call. Keep abreast of events. I'll take care of the rest...

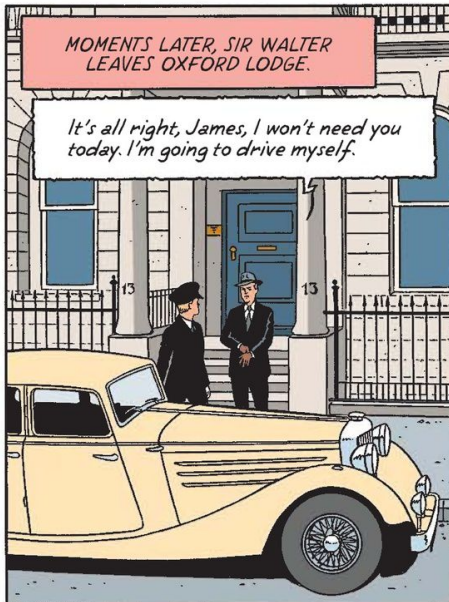


Good Lord! If this is true, it leaves us very little time... Apprentice, have my car readied.

Right away, Venerable Master.



I need someone both unscrupulous and with sufficient culture to be able to follow such a trail... Yes. I don't see anyone else but him. The problem being that... We'll see.

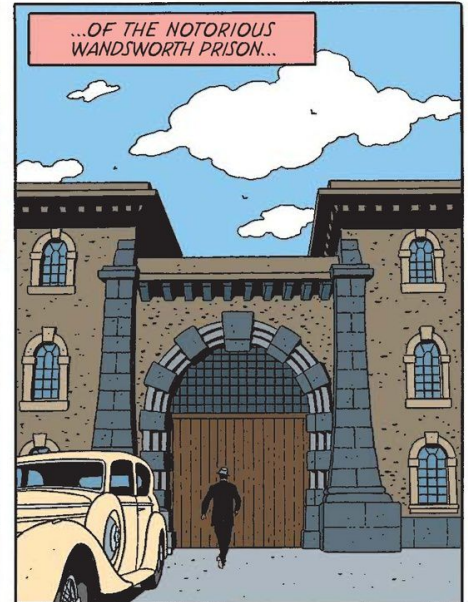


MOMENTS LATER, SIR WALTER LEAVES OXFORD LODGE.

It's all right, James, I won't need you today. I'm going to drive myself.



HE IMMEDIATELY PLUNGES INTO LONDON'S TRAFFIC TO HEAD TO THE DECIDEDLY LESS POSH NEIGHBOURHOOD...



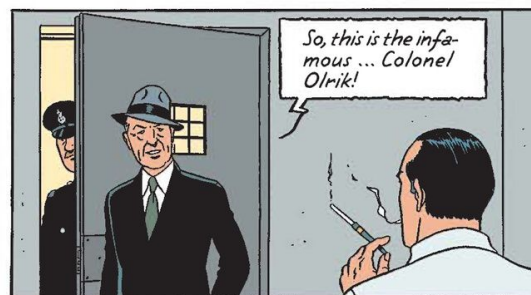
...OF THE NOTORIOUS WANDSWORTH PRISON...



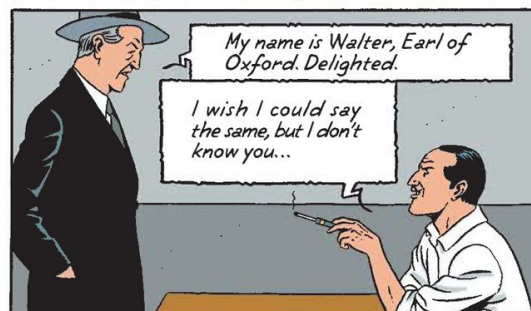
...WHERE SIR WALTER SEEMS TO HAVE PRIVILEGED ACCESS.

Here, and make sure we have the visiting room to ourselves for at least half an hour.

More than half an hour and it's extra, m'lord...

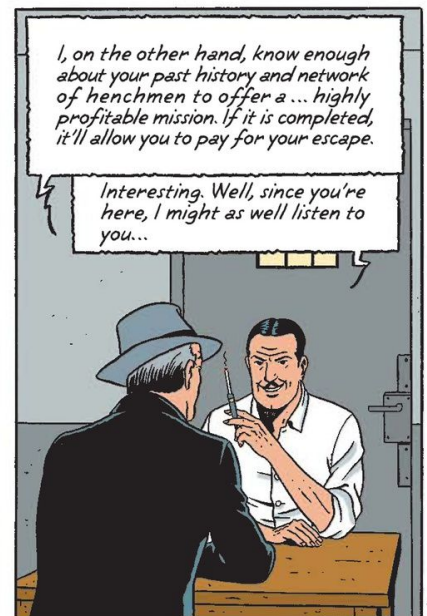


So, this is the infamous ... Colonel Olrik!



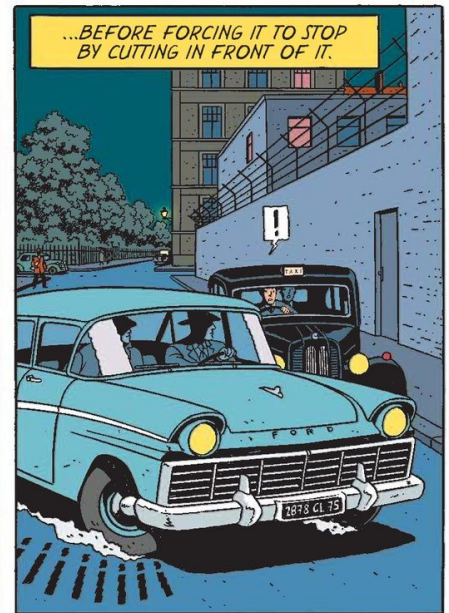
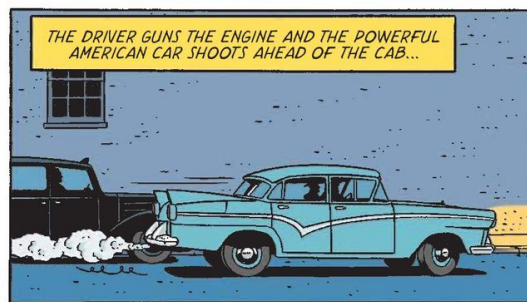
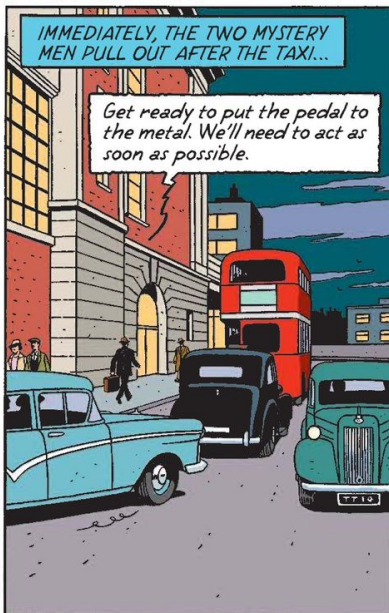
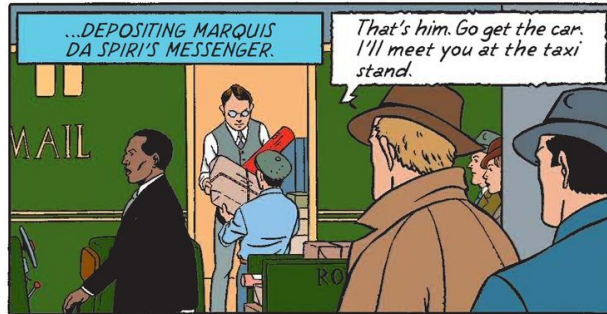
My name is Walter, Earl of Oxford. Delighted.

I wish I could say the same, but I don't know you...



I, on the other hand, know enough about your past history and network of henchmen to offer a ... highly profitable mission. If it is completed, it'll allow you to pay for your escape.

Interesting. Well, since you're here, I might as well listen to you...



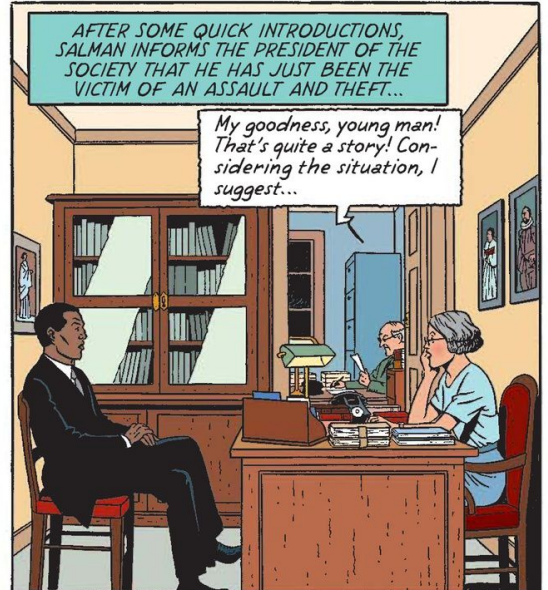


FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, THE TAXI DROPS OFF HIS UNFORTUNATE PASSENGER.



Mr Spike? I'm Salman, Marquis Da Spiri's butler.

Please follow me. Mrs Summer-town is waiting for you.



AFTER SOME QUICK INTRODUCTIONS, SALMAN INFORMS THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY THAT HE HAS JUST BEEN THE VICTIM OF AN ASSAULT AND THEFT...

My goodness, young man! That's quite a story! Considering the situation, I suggest...



...that we call the Marquis right away.

I was about to ask.



...Yes, I think I understand, Marquis. Thank you for your trust... I'm going to call the captain immediately. He'll have the originals sent to me as soon as he gets them tomorrow... Yes, of course. The moment I know something new... Good-night, Marquis.



Your employer gave me a quick description of his discovery. What's incredible is that these events have occurred precisely this year ... and at the end of August too!

What do you mean? How is the date relevant to any of this?



SUCCINCTLY, STEFANO DA SPIRI IS BROUGHT UP TO DATE.

Hmm. I see... No, don't say that, Salman. This isn't your fault... Very well. Let me speak to her.



I have to check something important. But first of all...



SECONDS LATER, THE TELEPHONE RINGS IN THE LIVING ROOM OF 99A PARK LANE.

DRIING
DRIING



IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG FOR THE PROFESSOR TO DETECT THE WORRY IN HIS FRIEND'S VOICE.

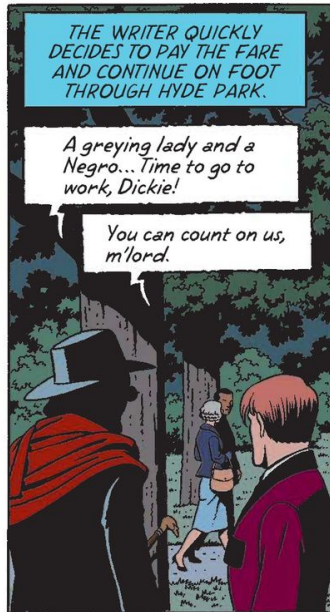
The captain? He's not here, but he shouldn't be much longer, and... I see... Why don't you come over with your visitor? We'll wait for him together... Excellent. I'll see you in a bit, then!

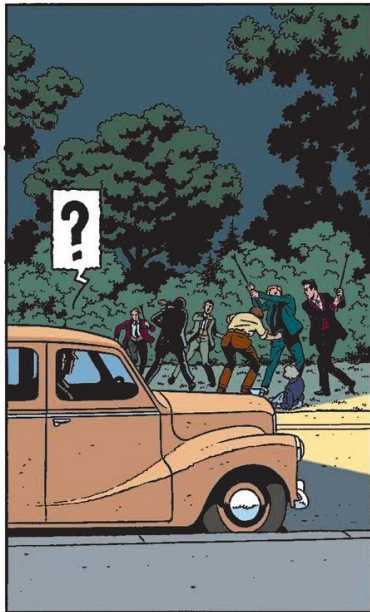


MEANWHILE, IN WANDSWORTH...

That's all there was, boss. Can't make head or tail of it - it's all gibberish...

Of course you can't, fool! It's Latin. I'm going to read this tonight. Come back tomorrow morning first thing.





Goodness gracious! Philip's under attack! David, with me!



By Saint George! Those two again!

Hold on, Philip! We're coming!



We're done! Scatter! Scatter!

Shall we pursue them, Captain?



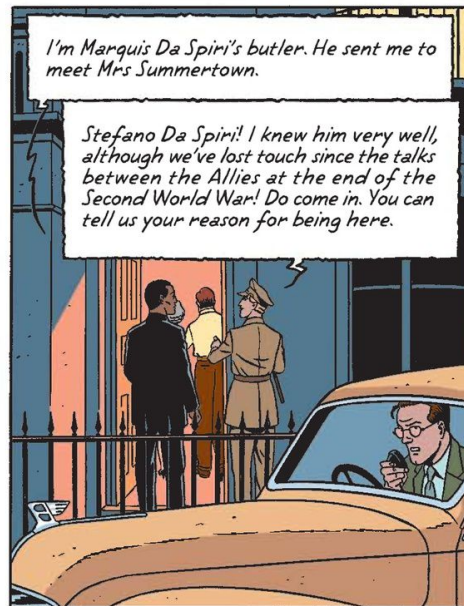
No, David. Call Kendall and ask him to have the parks surrounded, even though I'm afraid it's already too late.

Hold on to my arm and let's go inside, Sarah. Mrs Benson will prepare us a tonic.



Excuse me. May I have a look at this cane, mister... Mister...?

Salman, sir. Here, it's all yours.



I'm Marquis Da Spiri's butler. He sent me to meet Mrs Summertown.

Stefano Da Spiri! I knew him very well, although we've lost touch since the talks between the Allies at the end of the Second World War! Do come in. You can tell us your reason for being here.

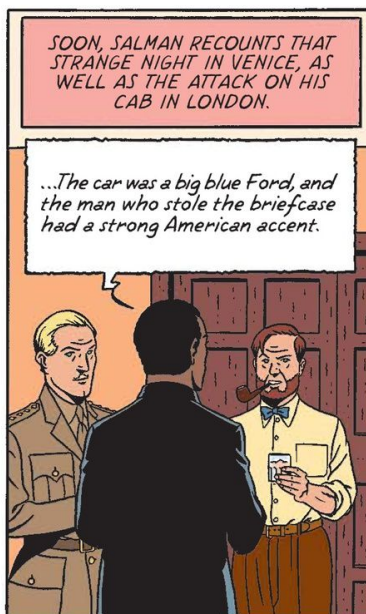


I'm going to call a doctor.



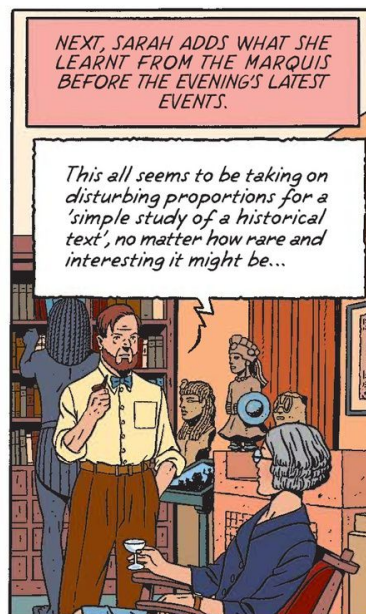
No need to bother a doctor at this hour, Philip. I already feel much better.

You need to put ice around the ankle. Leave it to me!



SOON, SALMAN RECOUNTS THAT STRANGE NIGHT IN VENICE, AS WELL AS THE ATTACK ON HIS CAB IN LONDON.

...The car was a big blue Ford, and the man who stole the briefcase had a strong American accent.



NEXT, SARAH ADDS WHAT SHE LEARNT FROM THE MARQUIS BEFORE THE EVENING'S LATEST EVENTS.

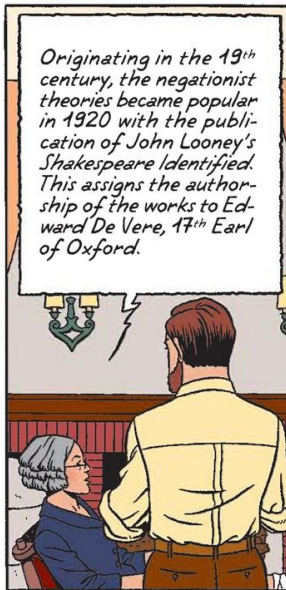
This all seems to be taking on disturbing proportions for a 'simple study of a historical text', no matter how rare and interesting it might be...



I'm afraid, Philip, that this isn't merely about an intellectual joust between scholars ...



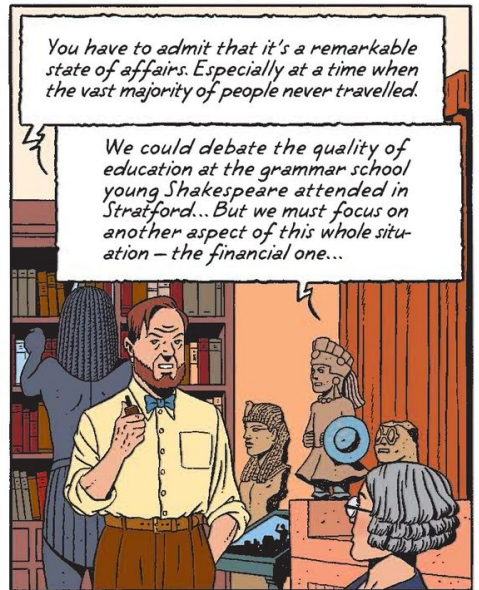
Last night at the Royal Albert Hall, I mentioned the old rivalry between Stratfordians and Oxfordians. Well, now I need to give you a few more details about that...



Originating in the 19th century, the negationist theories became popular in 1920 with the publication of John Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*. This assigns the authorship of the works to Edward De Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.



Looney considered that a provincial from Stratford could never have had such an astute and far-ranging knowledge of European cultures, and even less of the world of nobility, as was necessary to write his plays.



You have to admit that it's a remarkable state of affairs. Especially at a time when the vast majority of people never travelled.

We could debate the quality of education at the grammar school young Shakespeare attended in Stratford... But we must focus on another aspect of this whole situation – the financial one...



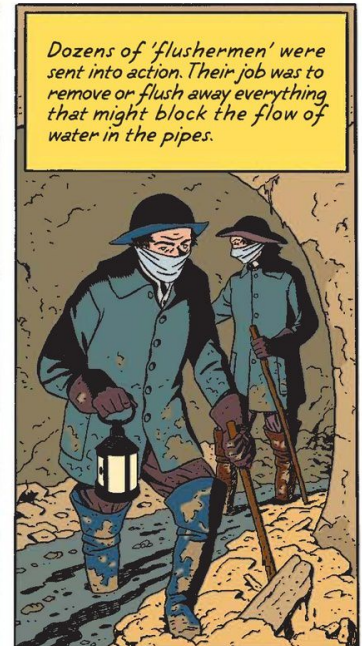
And that brings us back to the 19th century, and to a striking moment in London's history. I'm sure you've heard of the 'Great Stink' of 1858?



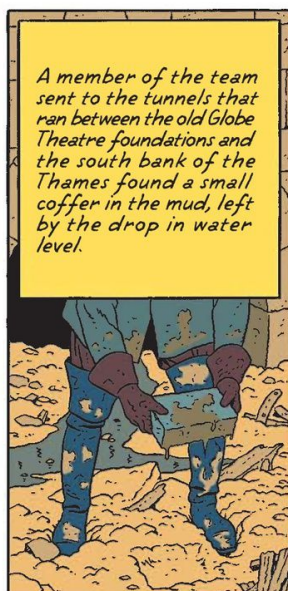
Summer was exceptionally hot that year. The level of the Thames lowered considerably. Soon, the smell from the stagnant waters became unbearable.



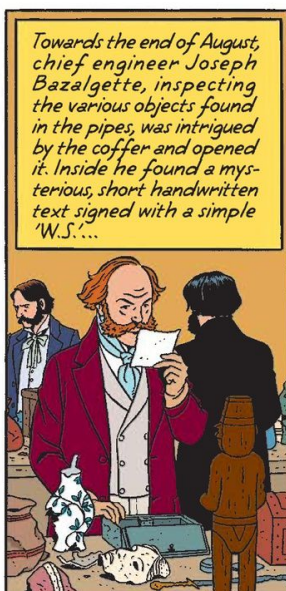
The authorities, worried about the spread of cholera, commissioned Joseph Bazalgette, chief engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works, to effect a thorough cleaning of the sewer system, followed by its overhaul and extension.



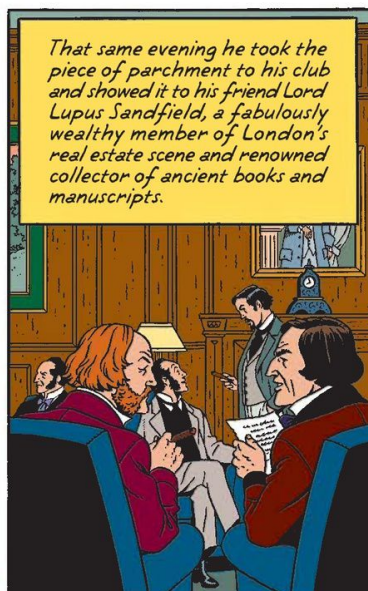
Dozens of 'flushermen' were sent into action. Their job was to remove or flush away everything that might block the flow of water in the pipes.



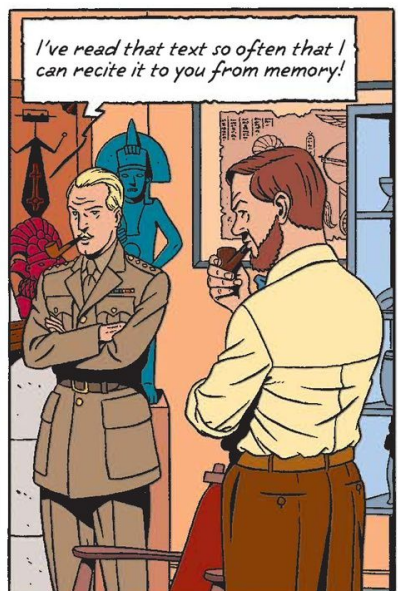
A member of the team sent to the tunnels that ran between the old Globe Theatre foundations and the south bank of the Thames found a small coffer in the mud, left by the drop in water level.



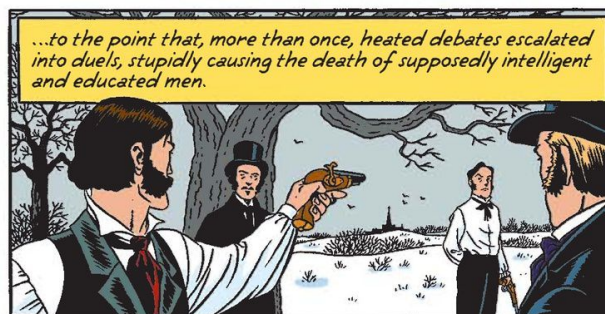
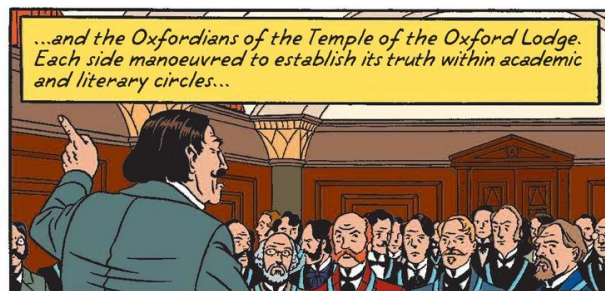
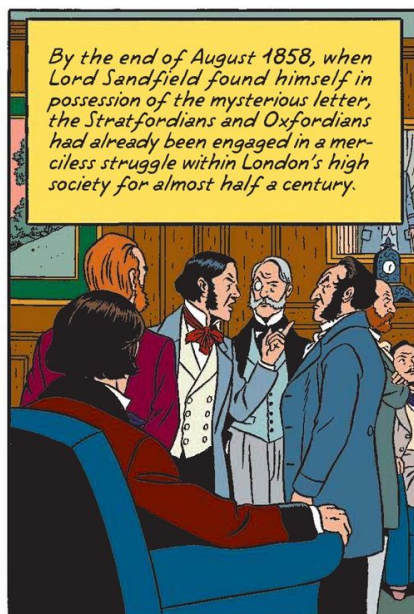
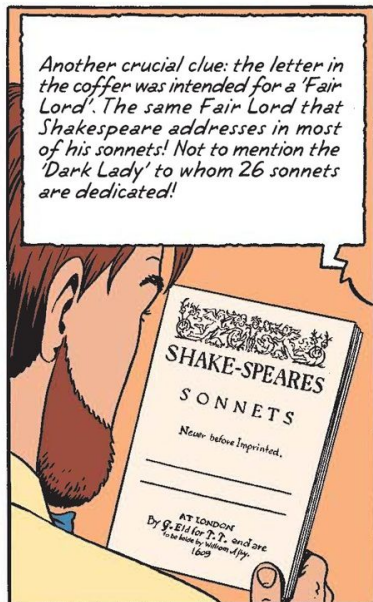
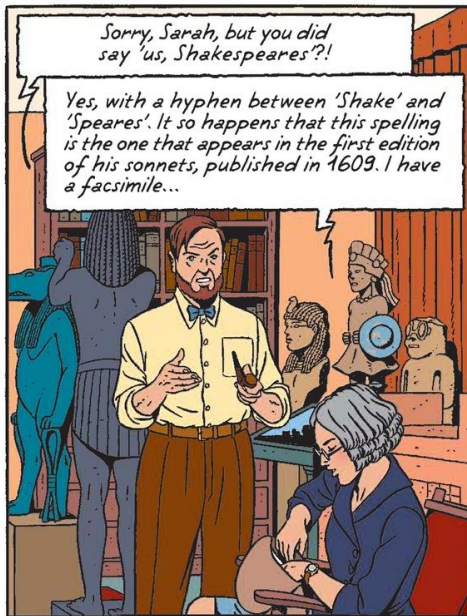
Towards the end of August, chief engineer Joseph Bazalgette, inspecting the various objects found in the pipes, was intrigued by the coffer and opened it. Inside he found a mysterious, short handwritten text signed with a simple 'W.S.'...



That same evening he took the piece of parchment to his club and showed it to his friend Lord Lupus Sandfield, a fabulously wealthy member of London's real estate scene and renowned collector of ancient books and manuscripts.



I've read that text so often that I can recite it to you from memory!

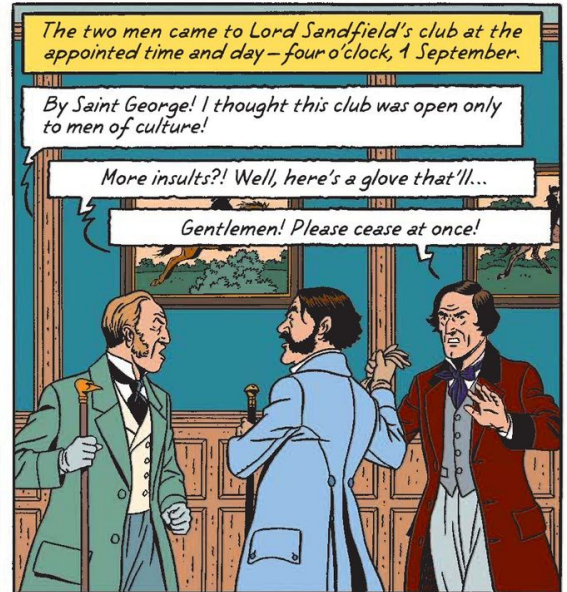




Three of Lord Lupus Sandfield's friends had already been killed in those pointless duels that pitted the rival societies against each other. He then had an idea to stop such an absurd waste of human lives.



On 30 August, he sent simultaneous invitations to Earl Francis of Oxford and Sir Douglas Pulteney, leaders of the anti- and pro-Stratfordians respectively.



The two men came to Lord Sandfield's club at the appointed time and day – four o'clock, 1 September.

By Saint George! I thought this club was open only to men of culture!

More insults?! Well, here's a glove that'll...

Gentlemen! Please cease at once!

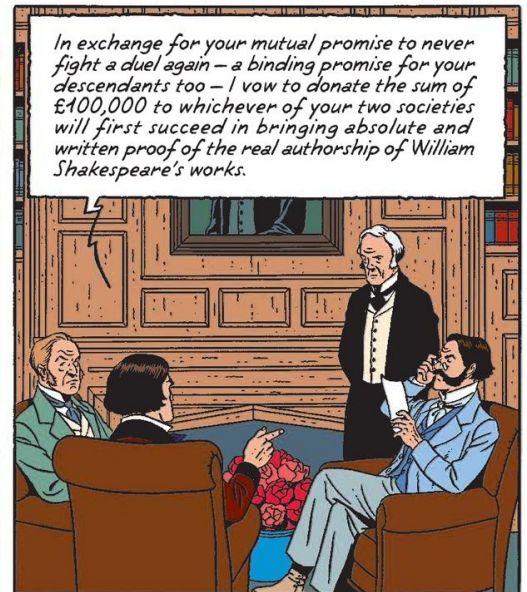


The gentlemen of London have had quite enough of your ridiculous conflict. So you're going to listen very carefully!



After showing his two guests the documents recovered from the sewers, Lord Sandfield exposed – and imposed – his 'peace plan'.

...In conclusion, here is the agreement that I am asking you to sign today, before my solicitor Mr Gilbert Bridges.



In exchange for your mutual promise to never fight a duel again – a binding promise for your descendants too – I vow to donate the sum of £100,000 to whichever of your two societies will first succeed in bringing absolute and written proof of the real authorship of William Shakespeare's works.



This offer will stand for a **hundred years** as of today at five o'clock, on condition that my descendants will maintain it. I sincerely hope so.



If they don't, or a century passes without proof, the offer will expire and the money will go to my heirs.

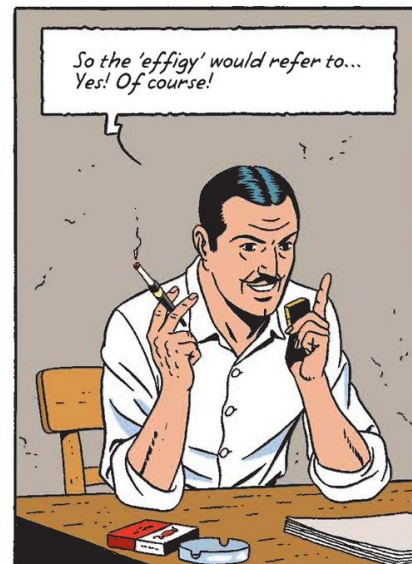
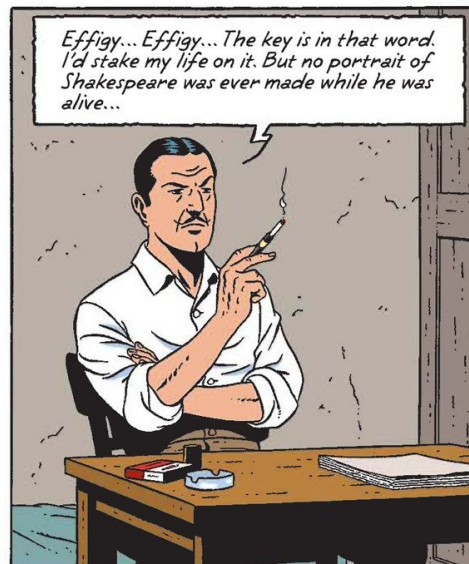
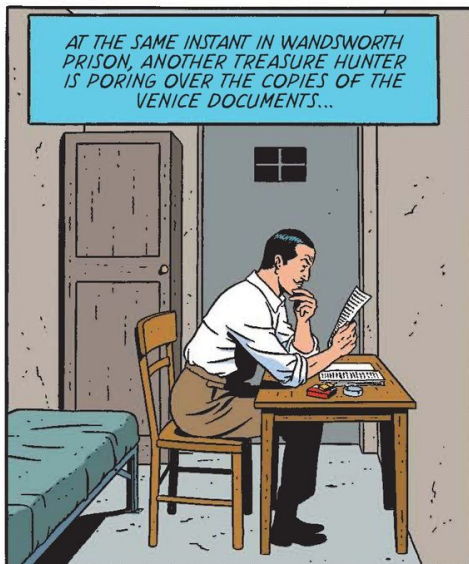
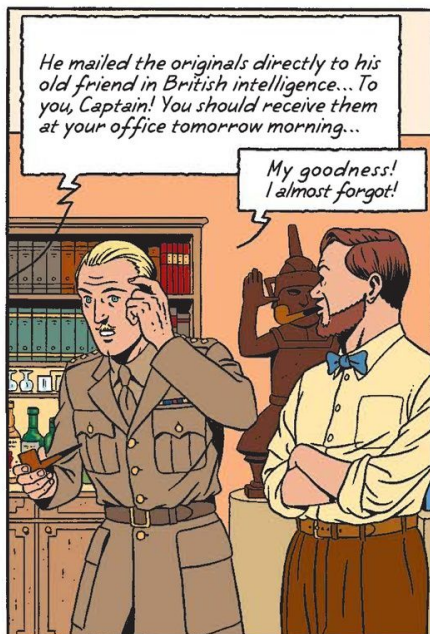


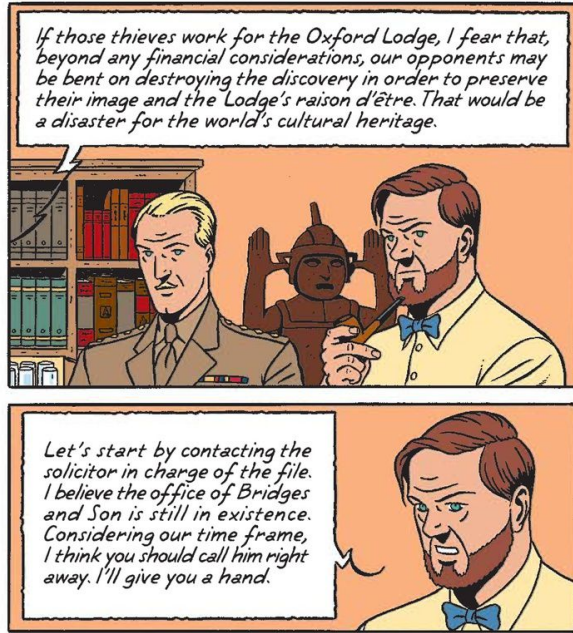
That was well played on the part of Lord Sandfield. I imagine he was hoping a century would be enough to bury old hatreds once and for all.

Exactly, Captain. And the plan worked!



The two societies vowed to respect the pact, and from that day there was never another duel between their members. However, no tangible proof of who truly authored Shakespeare's work was found either...





AT THIS LATE HOUR, THE SOLICITOR'S TAXI ONLY TAKES A FEW MINUTES TO TRAVEL FROM GROSVENOR SQUARE TO HYDE PARK GARDENS.



Good evening, Jasper. I'm sorry for keeping you up so late.
That's all right, Mr Bridges. Lord Sandfield is waiting for you in his office.



Well, Mr Bridges, I hope you're not here to tell me that my finances are doing even worse than I thought!
Maybe not, my lord. Maybe not...



THE SOLICITOR WASTES NO TIME IN RECOUNTING THE CALL HE RECEIVED FROM SARAH SUMMERTOWN...

...and, having checked, I must conclude that the offer remains entirely valid. At least until this 1 September at five o'clock precisely.



AS THE TWO MEN DISCUSS THE SITUATION, A THIN WOOD PANEL IN ONE OF THE WALLS SLIDES OPEN SLIGHTLY.



FROM INSIDE A NARROW SECRET HALLWAY IN THE OLD HOUSE, THE SPY HEARS EVERY WORD OF THE CONVERSATION.



...all of this to remind you of the origin of and reasons behind your ancestor's bequest... However, the will also contains a key clause that could restore your finances entirely. Listen...



'Should I die before evidence is found, I ask my descendants to respect my wishes until the end of the hundred years. That said, the decision to honour my decision will rest only with them, and each one will be free to either retrieve the reserved sum or to confirm the terms of this will with solicitors Bridges and Sons.'

This is unequivocally clear, my lord. If you choose not to prolong the will, the money will revert to you immediately. In which case, all your pecuniary problems would...

That's out of the question!



I beg your pardon, my lord?

You heard me right, Mr Bridges.



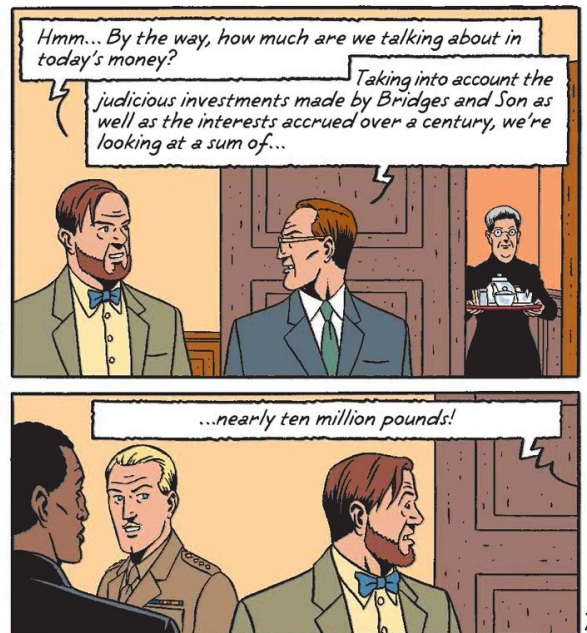
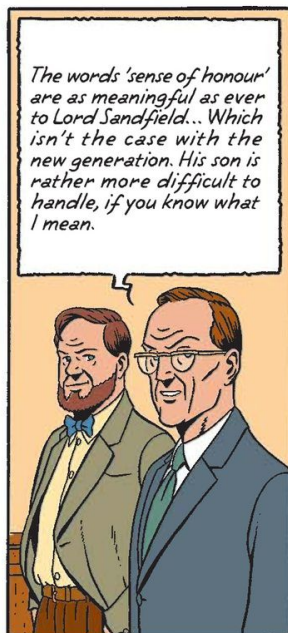
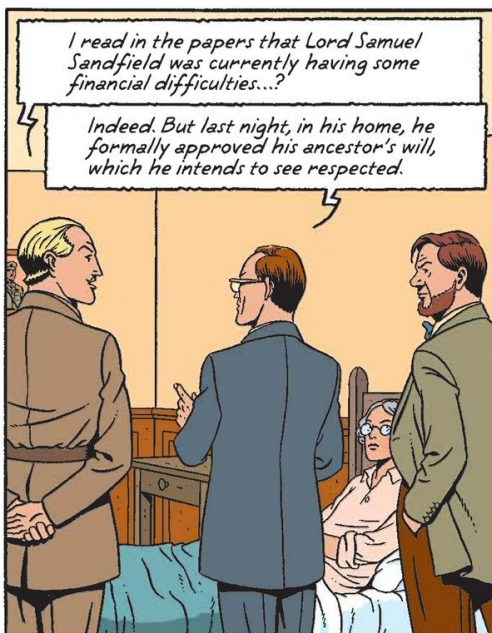
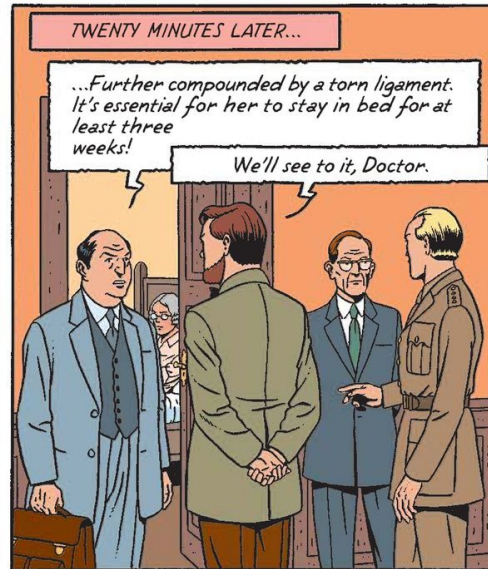
'...I ask my descendants to respect my wishes...' Lord Lupus isn't responsible for his heirs' bad financial luck. I shall therefore uphold his will and the family's honour. The matter is now closed ... until five o'clock on 1 September.

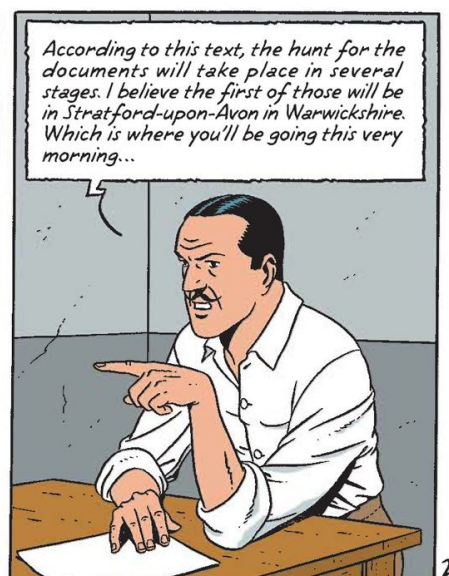
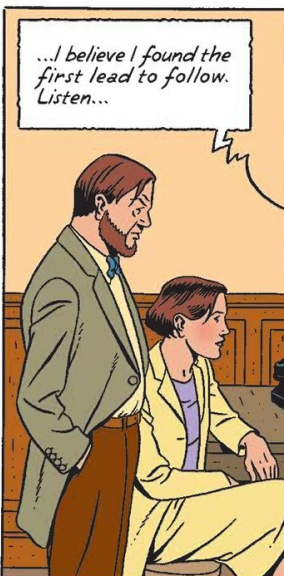
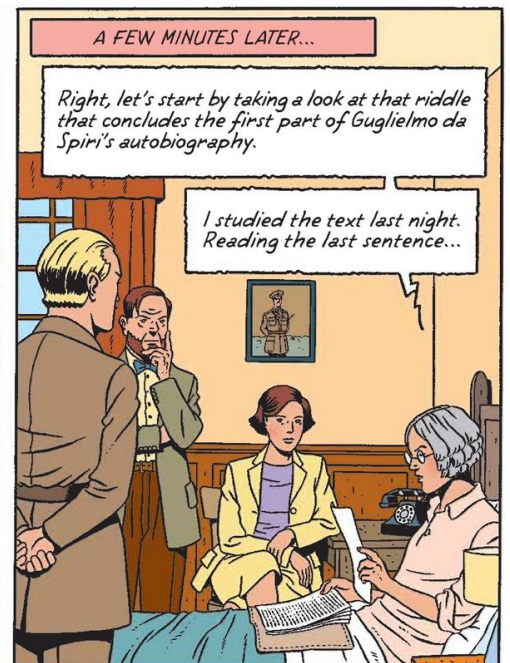
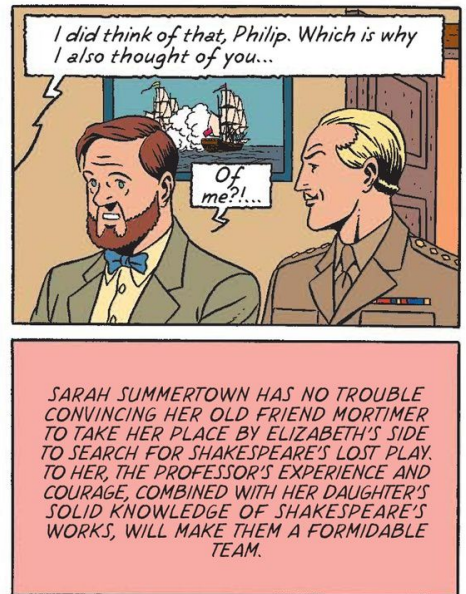
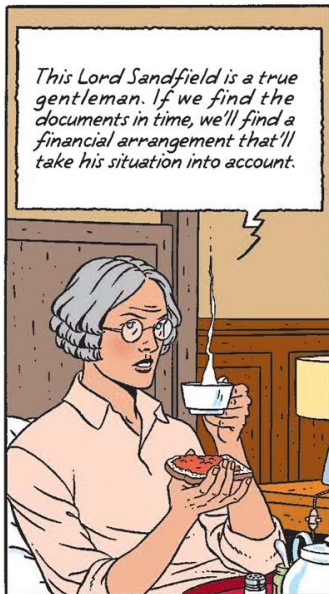


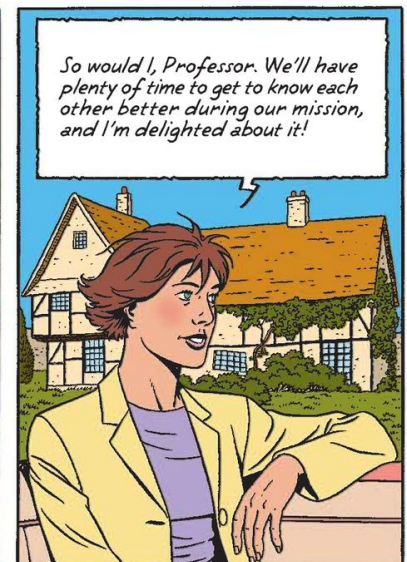
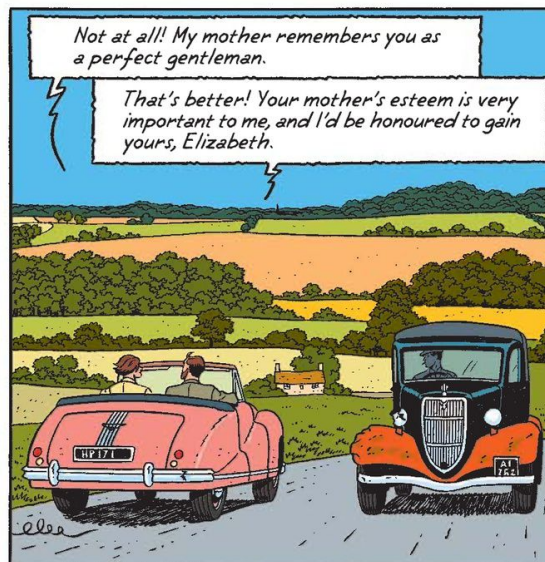
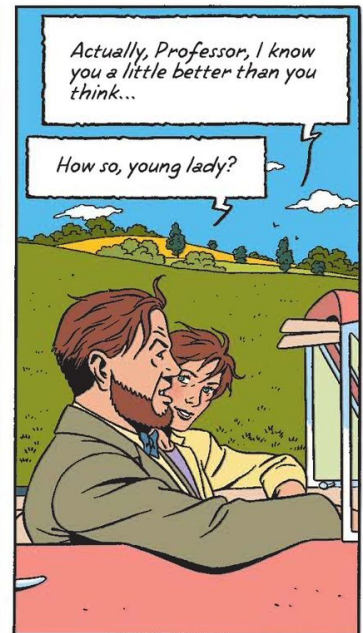
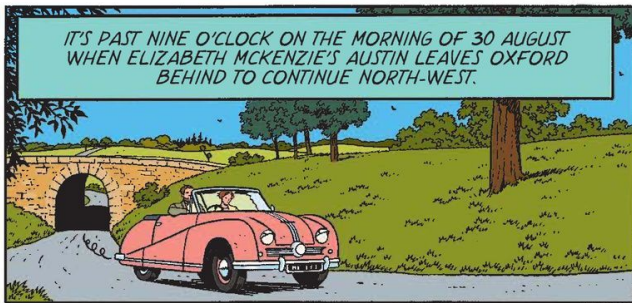
This decision does you credit, my lord.

That's it. It's clear now. The old man's gone totally mad!

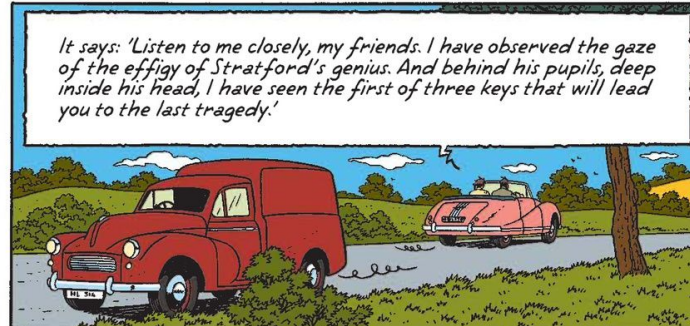


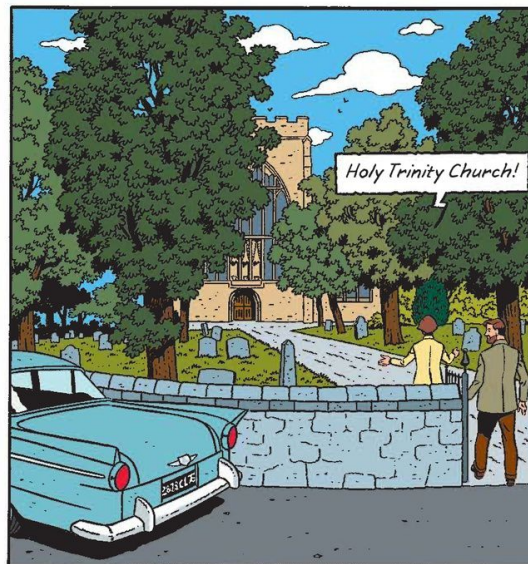
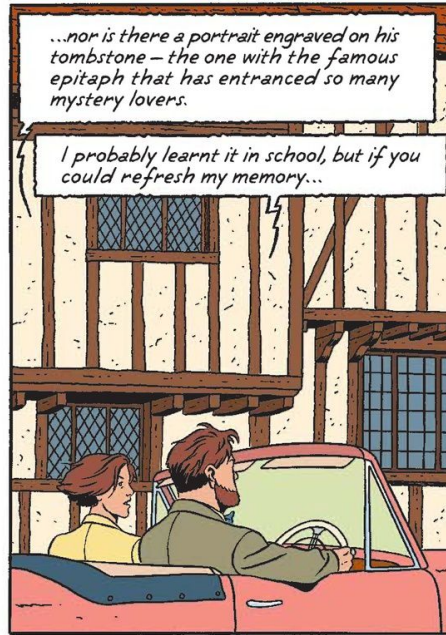
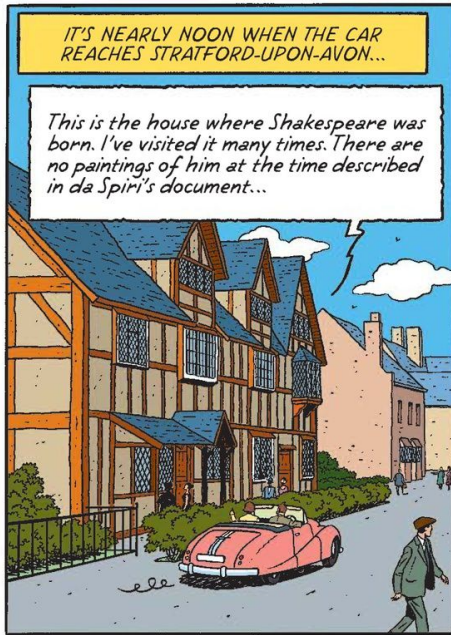






*SEE PART 4 OF THE SARCOPHAGI OF THE SIXTH CONTINENT AND THE GONDWANA SHRINE







You should be all right – it doesn't look that bad. What happened to you, Father?



A couple of tourists came. They asked where Shakespeare's bust was, and then one of them aimed a revolver at me while the other climbed onto a chair to ... tip it onto the floor! Lord almighty! It's terrible...



The sculpture shattered, and they kept hammering at the head with a candlestick. Then those madmen took a close look at the pieces and swore angrily. When they heard you come in, they knocked me out. I just came to...



In other words, Salman's attackers got here first. They had the same idea we had, but came away empty-handed.

Which also brings us back to square one. The riddle alludes to an effigy that existed at the beginning of the 17th century. But we aren't aware of any other than this one...



Our only other clue is that mention of the Serenissima...



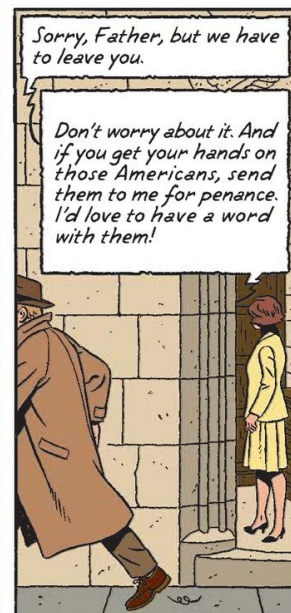
If it isn't in Stratford, then the answer to our riddle must be in Venice – I'm convinced of it. We have to go and inspect the palazzo of Marquis Da Spiri.

In Venice?! Aren't you forgetting that the air-traffic controllers' strike is still on ... and that time is of the essence?



If it's any help, there's a night train from London to Venice that leaves this evening. I know because my brother took it last week.

Excellent suggestion! If we call Blake so he'll book our tickets and then hurry, we can still make it.

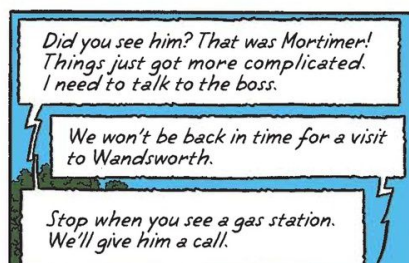


Sorry, Father, but we have to leave you.

Don't worry about it. And if you get your hands on those Americans, send them to me for penance. I'd love to have a word with them!



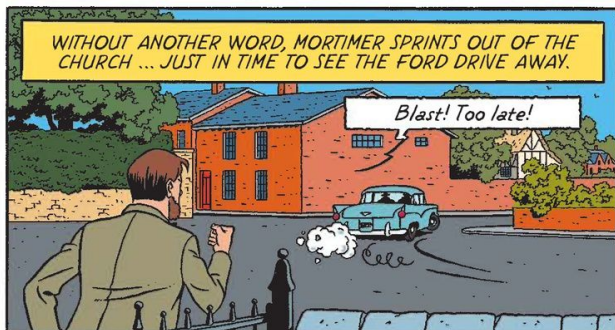
Wait a minute – did you say Americans?! Like Salman's attackers ... who drove a 'big blue car' ... like the one I saw as we arrived...



Did you see him? That was Mortimer! Things just got more complicated. I need to talk to the boss.

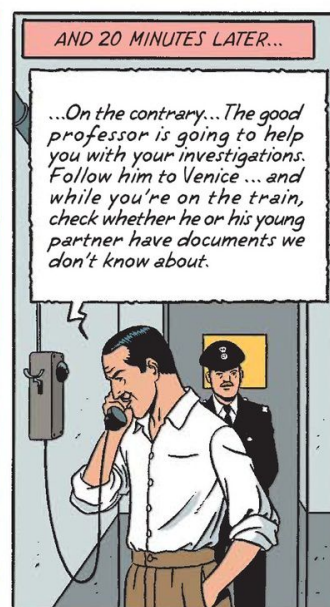
We won't be back in time for a visit to Wandsworth.

Stop when you see a gas station. We'll give him a call.



WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, MORTIMER SPRINTS OUT OF THE CHURCH ... JUST IN TIME TO SEE THE FORD DRIVE AWAY.

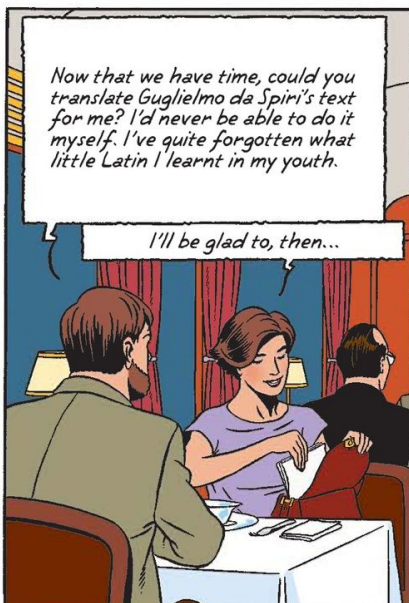
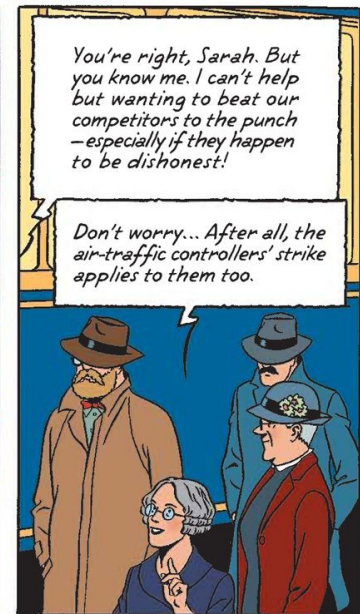
Blast! Too late!



AND 20 MINUTES LATER...

...On the contrary... The good professor is going to help you with your investigations. Follow him to Venice ... and while you're on the train, check whether he or his young partner have documents we don't know about.

THAT SAME EVENING IN LONDON,
ON A PLATFORM AT VICTORIA
STATION...



This was where, in April 1580, I met William Shake. On the recommendation of his former schoolteacher in Stratford, William had just entered Sir Alexander's service as a schoolmaster and was staying at Hoghton Tower.



'Born on 23 April 1564, and a Catholic like me, he was the third child of Johannes Shake, a prosperous glover and alderman of Stratford, and Mary Arden, member of the local gentry.



'I was immediately won over by the charm of that silver-tongued young man. We soon became fast friends.



'I was fascinated by science and arts, whereas he loved only to sing and play the clown. Not that he didn't put a certain elegance into it, whether in gesture or words, for a rough provincial.



'Like me, he had just turned sixteen. Back then, and at first glance, that was the only thing we had in common...'



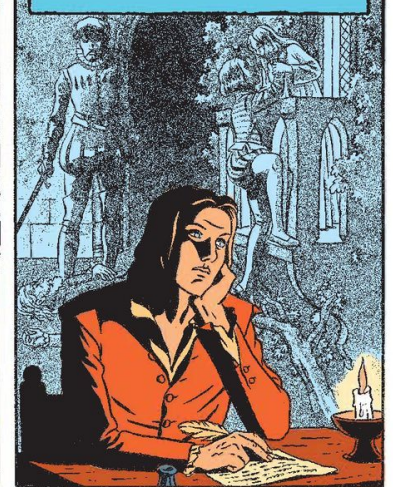
'...apart from both being passionately fond of the theatre. Like him, I would see stories unfold in my head that were far more enthralling than any we were given the chance to watch...



'Unfortunately, my position as a noble and heir to the family's business would not let me take these aspirations beyond mere dreams. I would find solace in telling William all the stories I'd heard during my trip across Europe, from my native Venetia to the Northern Kingdoms...



'From the old Italian legend of Romeus and Giulietta to the Germanic saga of King Horwendil, murdered by his brother Feng, I made my friend travel along the infinite roads of a culture he had never known.

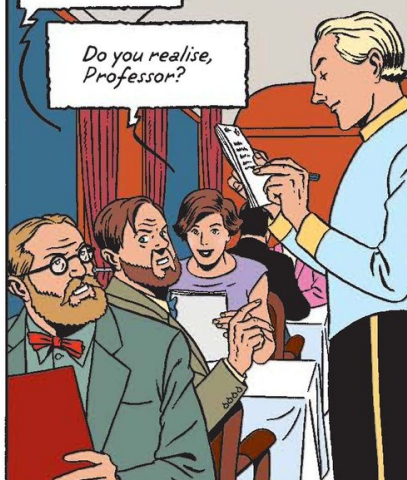


'Then he would reinvent these stories with his own characters and turns of phrase, until they became magical! And so would life go on at Hoghton Tower, happy and carefree...'



Waiter, please!

Do you realise, Professor?

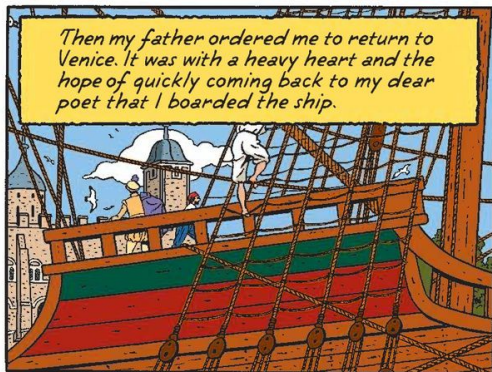


Absolutely every detail mentioned by da Spiri corroborates the meagre information gathered by historians.

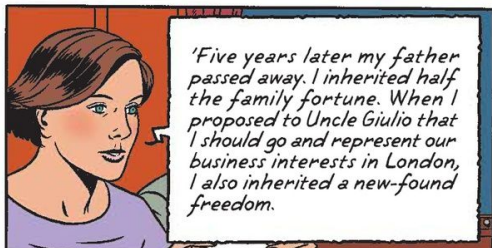


Fascinating, indeed! Do go on reading, please.

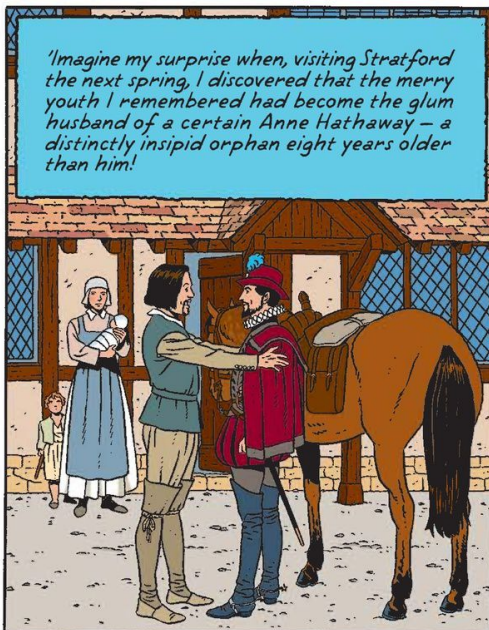




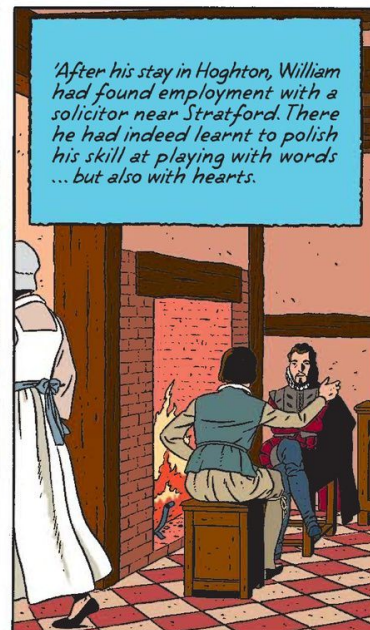
Then my father ordered me to return to Venice. It was with a heavy heart and the hope of quickly coming back to my dear poet that I boarded the ship.



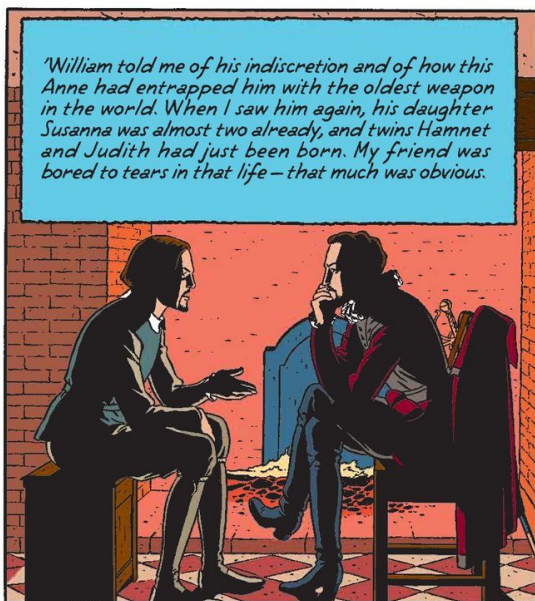
'Five years later my father passed away. I inherited half the family fortune. When I proposed to Uncle Giulio that I should go and represent our business interests in London, I also inherited a new-found freedom.



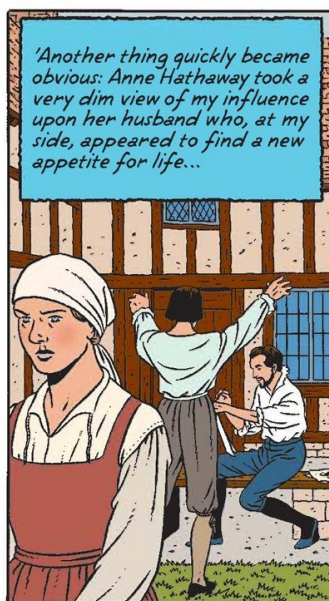
'Imagine my surprise when, visiting Stratford the next spring, I discovered that the merry youth I remembered had become the glum husband of a certain Anne Hathaway – a distinctly insipid orphan eight years older than him!



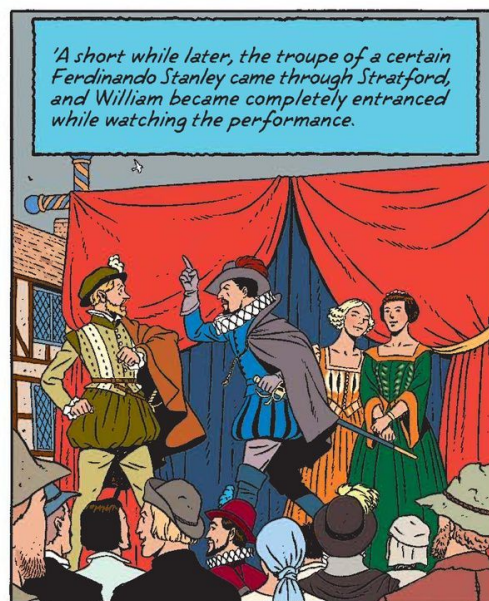
'After his stay in Hoghton, William had found employment with a solicitor near Stratford. There he had indeed learnt to polish his skill at playing with words ... but also with hearts.



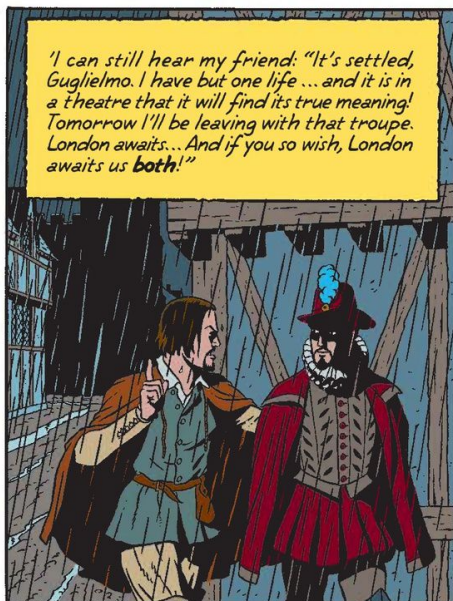
'William told me of his indiscretion and of how this Anne had entrapped him with the oldest weapon in the world. When I saw him again, his daughter Susanna was almost two already, and twins Hamnet and Judith had just been born. My friend was bored to tears in that life – that much was obvious.



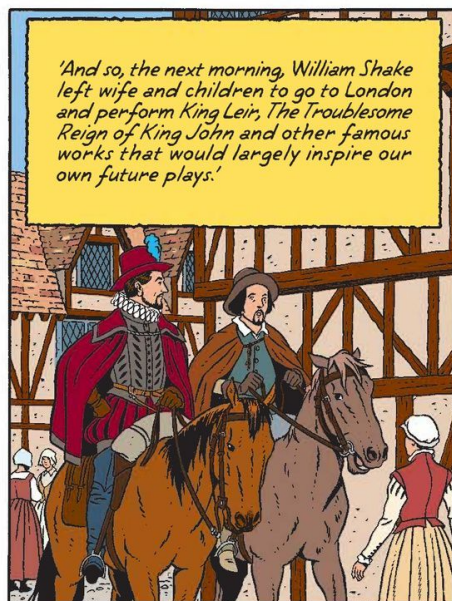
'Another thing quickly became obvious: Anne Hathaway took a very dim view of my influence upon her husband who, at my side, appeared to find a new appetite for life...



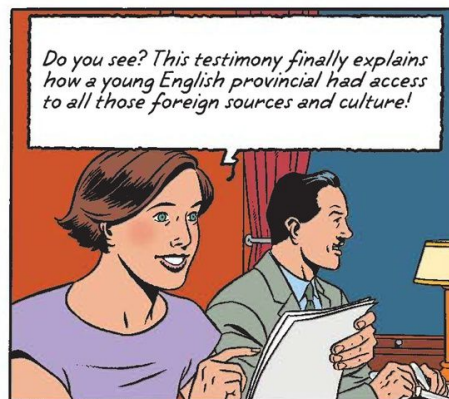
'A short while later, the troupe of a certain Ferdinando Stanley came through Stratford, and William became completely entranced while watching the performance.



'I can still hear my friend: "It's settled, Guglielmo. I have but one life ... and it is in a theatre that it will find its true meaning! Tomorrow I'll be leaving with that troupe. London awaits... And if you so wish, London awaits us **both**!"



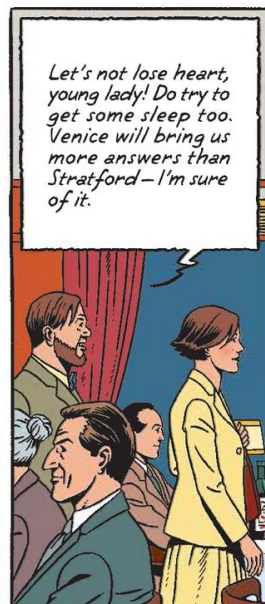
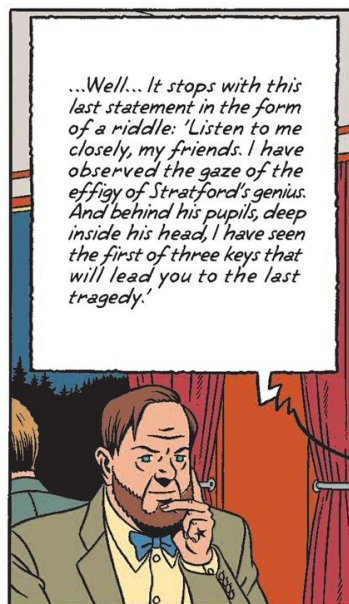
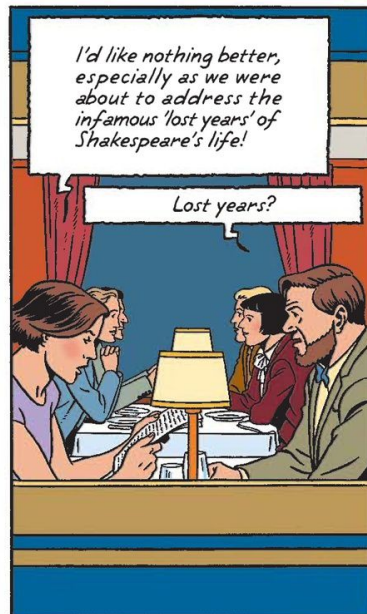
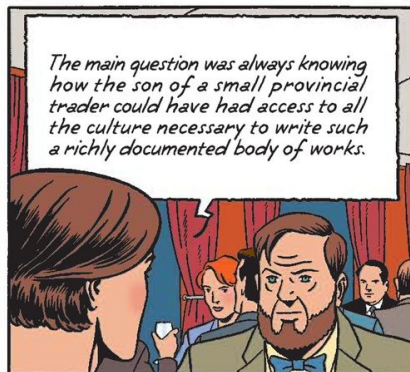
'And so, the next morning, William Shake left wife and children to go to London and perform King Leir, The Troublesome Reign of King John and other famous works that would largely inspire our own future plays.'

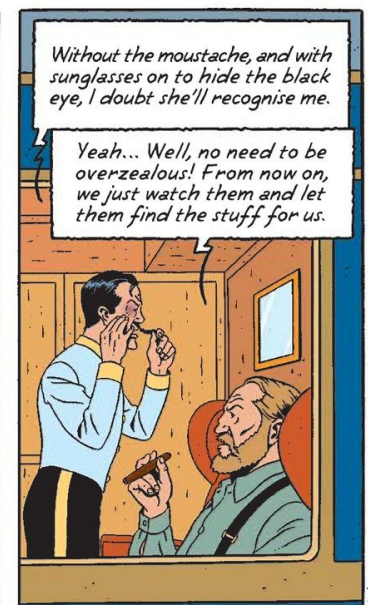
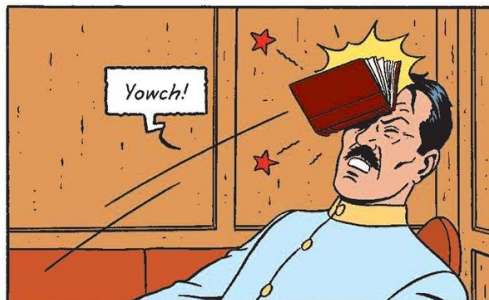
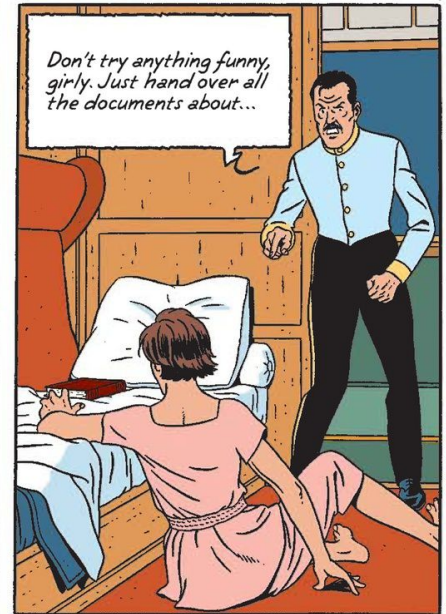


Do you see? This testimony finally explains how a young English provincial had access to all those foreign sources and culture!

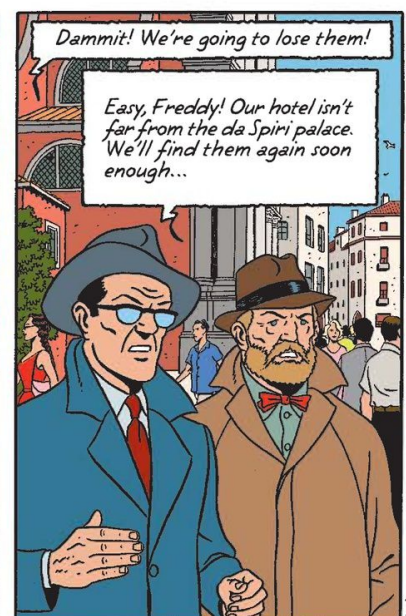
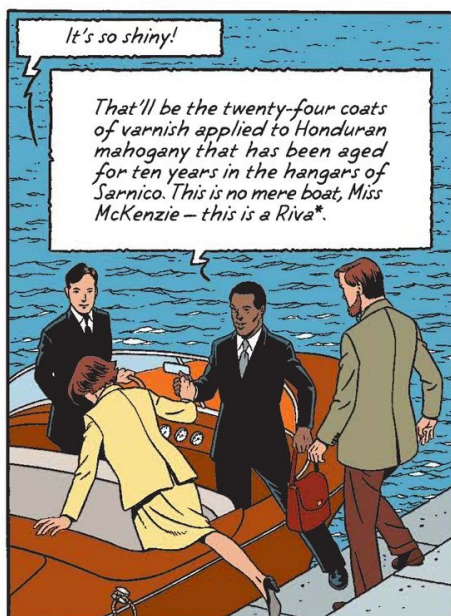
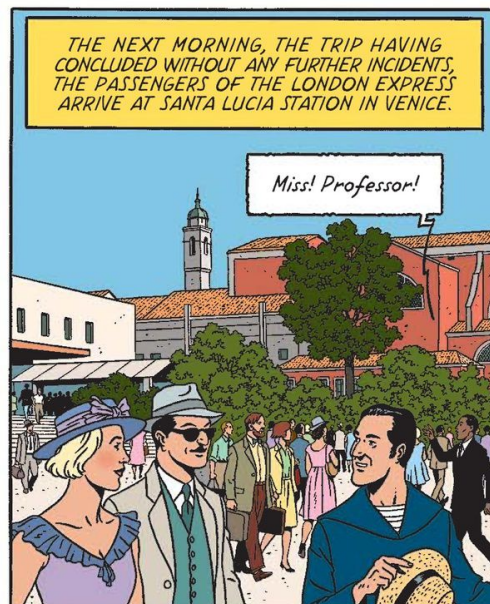
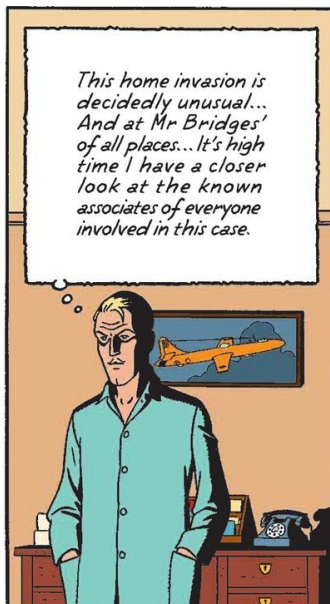
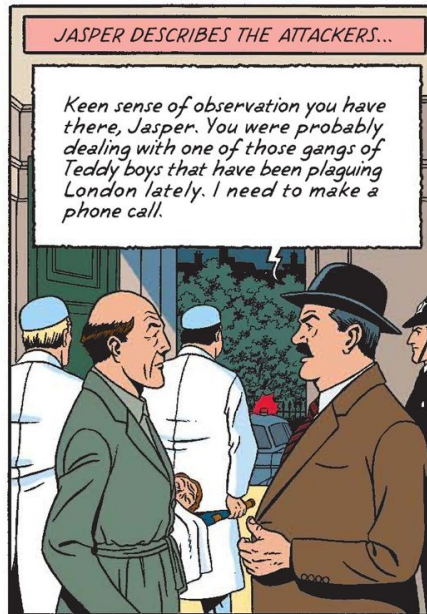


What do you mean?

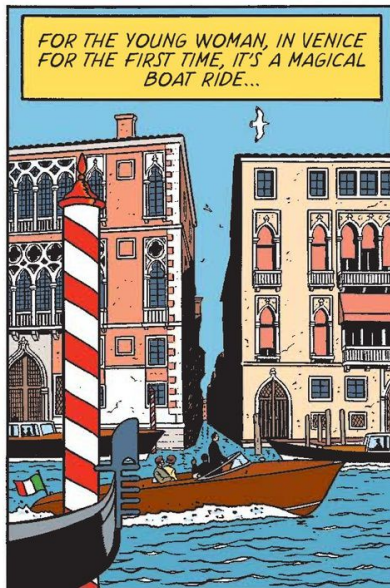








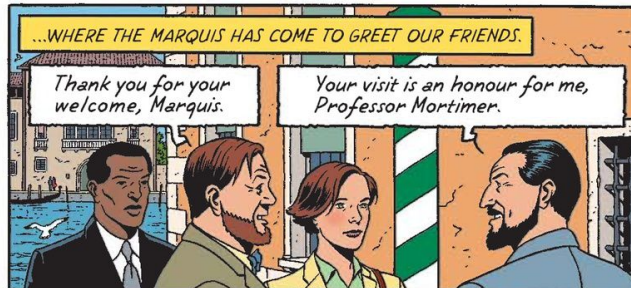
*LEGENDARY HIGH-END BOATBUILDERS IN SARNICO, NORTHERN ITALY.
 **LET'S GO!



FOR THE YOUNG WOMAN, IN VENICE FOR THE FIRST TIME, IT'S A MAGICAL BOAT RIDE...



...THAT ENDS AT THE DOCK OF THE PALAZZO DA SPIRI...



Thank you for your welcome, Marquis.

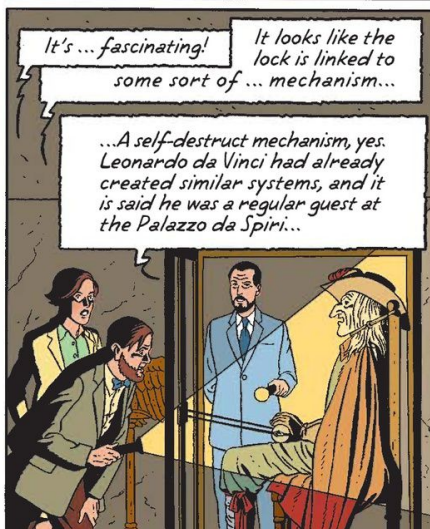
Your visit is an honour for me, Professor Mortimer.



I imagine you'd like to see 'the cage' right away?

Indeed. Every second counts, as you know...

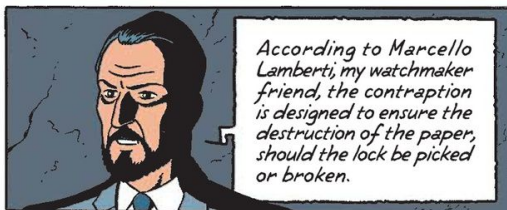
THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE LEADS HIS VISITORS TO THE SECRET CHAMBER, WHERE THE DISTURBING DUMMY AWAITS IN HIS GLASS PRISON.



It's ... fascinating!

It looks like the lock is linked to some sort of ... mechanism...

...A self-destruct mechanism, yes. Leonardo da Vinci had already created similar systems, and it is said he was a regular guest at the Palazzo da Spiri...



According to Marcello Lamberti, my watchmaker friend, the contraption is designed to ensure the destruction of the paper, should the lock be picked or broken.

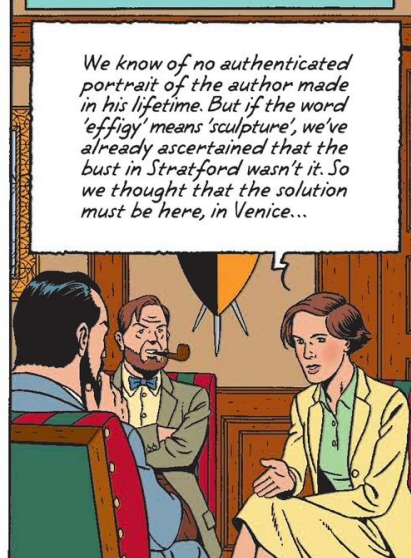


My ancestor's letter mentioned three keys to be found. And yet there are only two keyholes.



Perhaps a single key will in fact fit both. We'll worry about that later. I think we can go back upstairs.

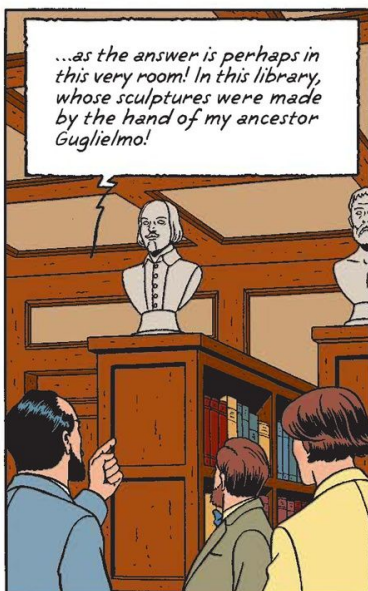
AFTER HALF AN HOUR OUR FRIENDS HAVE FINISHED RECOUNTING THE PROGRESS THEY'VE MADE IN THEIR INVESTIGATION.



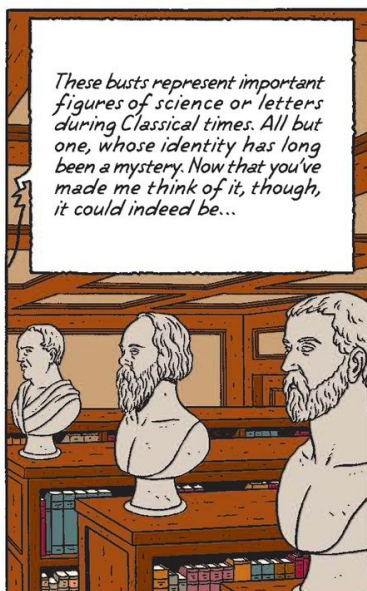
We know of no authenticated portrait of the author made in his lifetime. But if the word 'effigy' means 'sculpture', we've already ascertained that the bust in Stratford wasn't it. So we thought that the solution must be here, in Venice...



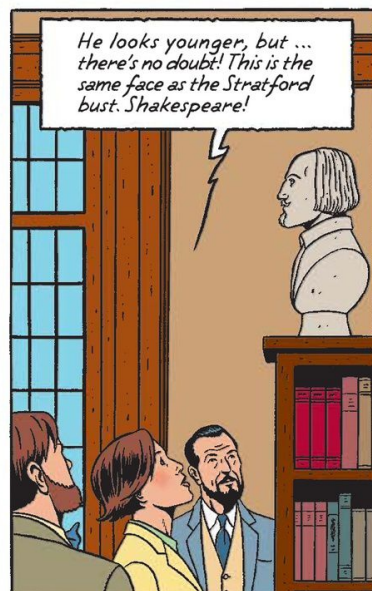
You may be more right than you know, dear friends...



...as the answer is perhaps in this very room! In this library, whose sculptures were made by the hand of my ancestor Guglielmo!



These busts represent important figures of science or letters during Classical times. All but one, whose identity has long been a mystery. Now that you've made me think of it, though, it could indeed be...



He looks younger, but ... there's no doubt! This is the same face as the Stratford bust. Shakespeare!



May I?

By all means.
Be careful,
they're on the
heavy side...



Indeed. It's not hollow.
Nothing could be hiding
inside that head - 'be-
hind his pupils'.



Wait a minute! My ancestor
had made copies of these
sculptures. They lay forgotten
in the cellars of the palazzo
for centuries. A few years ago
I donated them to my friend
Peggy Newgold for her private
museum.



Plaster copies?! Of course! Those are
the ones we need to see!

Peggy is one of my most delightful
friends. Salman will take you to
her home. A prior commitment
prevents me from going with you,
but I'll call ahead to tell her
you're coming.



HAVING THANKED THEIR HOST, MORTIMER AND
ELIZABETH IMMEDIATELY BOARD THE RIVA AGAIN...



...WHILE THE MARQUIS CALLS HIS FRIEND.

...And according to the
professor, the mystery
of the glass cage could
be partly unravelled at
your place, thanks to one
of your plaster busts!

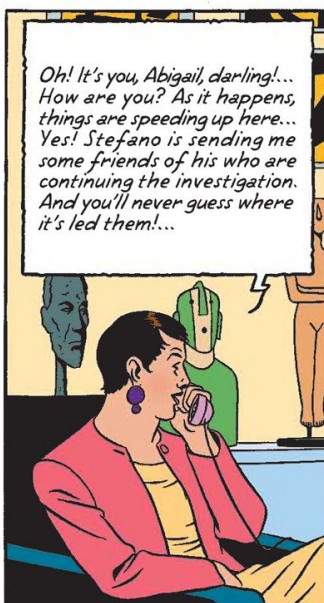


This is all wonderfully exciting!
Don't worry, dear. I'm going to
meet them right away and show
them that bust...



Ah! Dear absent-minded
Stefano forgot to tell me
something!

Driiiiing!
Drrrrriiiiing!



Oh! It's you, Abigail, darling!...
How are you? As it happens,
things are speeding up here...
Yes! Stefano is sending me
some friends of his who are
continuing the investigation.
And you'll never guess where
it's led them!...



Your place?! That is rather
unexpected indeed!... Yes,
of course... But only if
you promise to keep me
informed... I'm counting
on you, my dear!... Yes!
Arrivederci!*



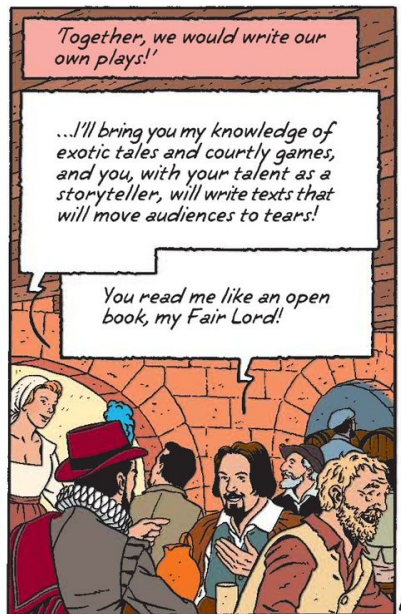
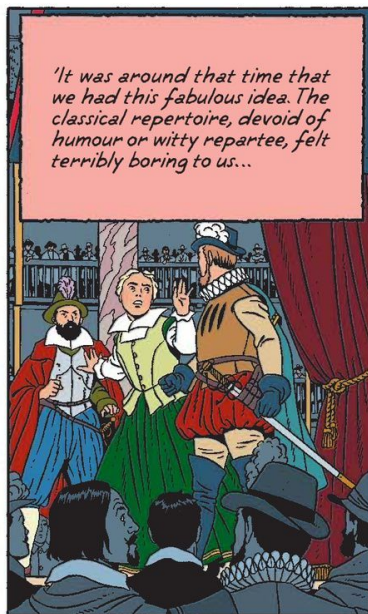
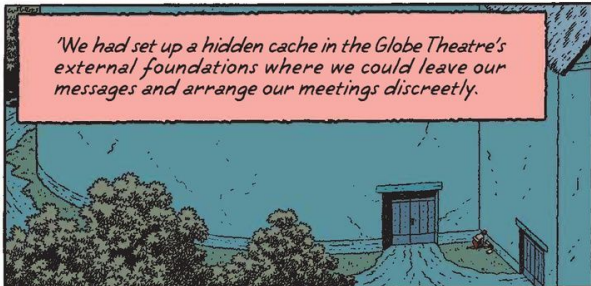
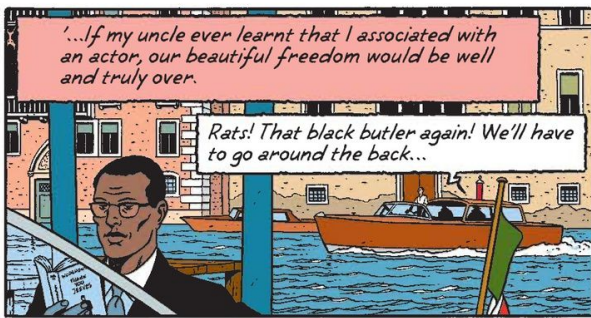
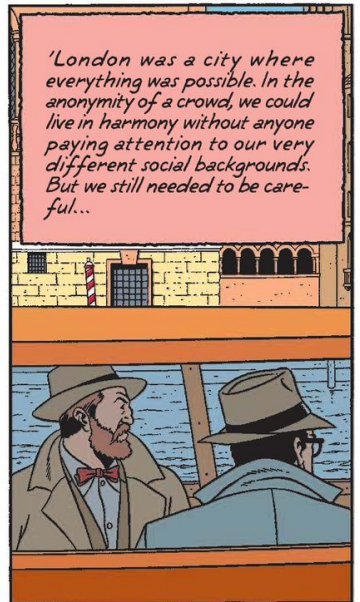
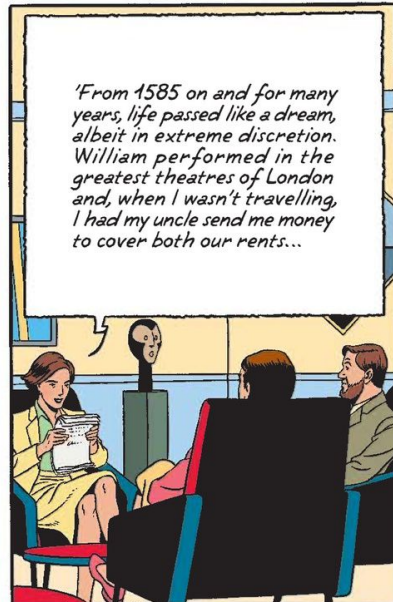
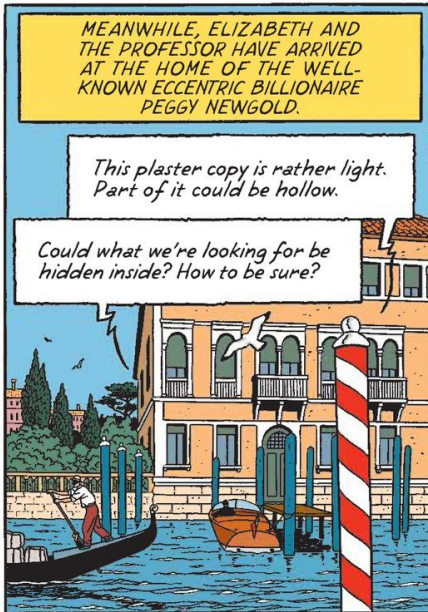
I think I just called the
right person ... at the
right time. We must
contact our man in
Venice. Quickly!



MOMENTS LATER, IN A SMALL
VENETIAN HOTEL A STONE'S
THROW FROM THE PALAZZO
DA SPIRI.

Hello? Yes, sir... OK...
Yes, I wrote down the
address. We're already
on our way.

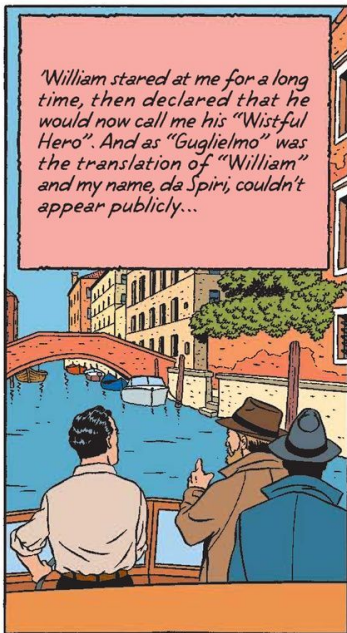
*GOODBYE!





'William wanted us to sign our work jointly, but it wasn't really feasible.

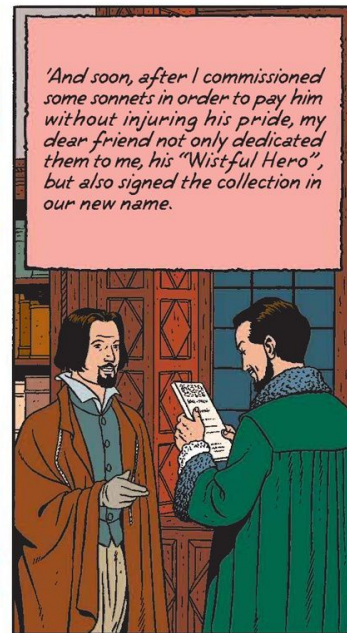
It would mean the end of my freedom, and I'd have to say goodbye to my uncle's money. But I do not care for fame, anyway. All that matters is that our plays meet with success!



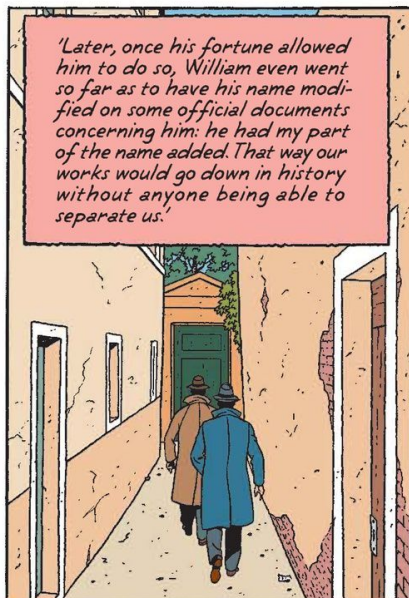
'William stared at me for a long time, then declared that he would now call me his "Wistful Hero". And as "Guglielmo" was the translation of "William" and my name, da Spiri, couldn't appear publicly...



'...he decided to play with the words, so that the name William Shakespeare would be etched on people's minds as the unique author of our joint work.



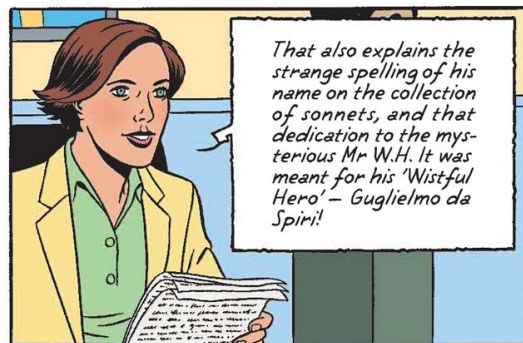
'And soon, after I commissioned some sonnets in order to pay him without injuring his pride, my dear friend not only dedicated them to me, his "Wistful Hero", but also signed the collection in our new name.



'Later, once his fortune allowed him to do so, William even went so far as to have his name modified on some official documents concerning him: he had my part of the name added. That way our works would go down in history without anyone being able to separate us.'



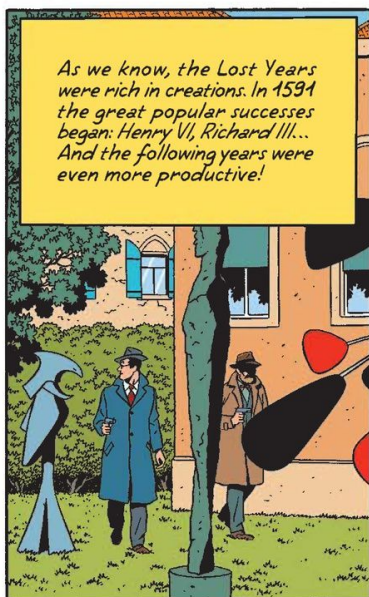
So there's the hidden truth. William Shakespeare was ... two people behind a single body of work! Incredible!



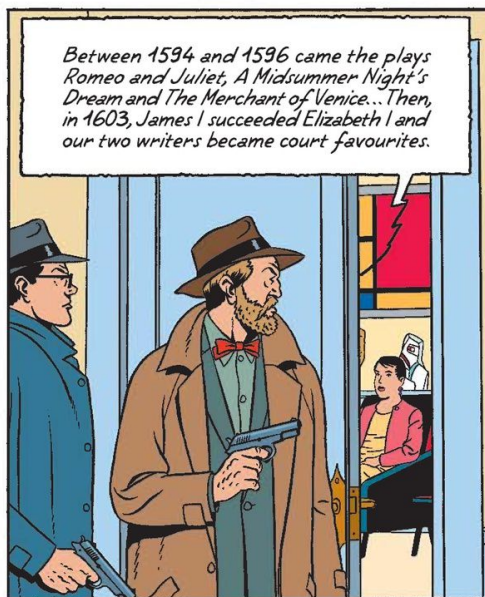
That also explains the strange spelling of his name on the collection of sonnets, and that dedication to the mysterious Mr W.H. It was meant for his 'Wistful Hero' - Guglielmo da Spiri!



What else does the text say? We have to solve the next riddle, quickly...



As we know, the Lost Years were rich in creations. In 1594 the great popular successes began: Henry VI, Richard III... And the following years were even more productive!



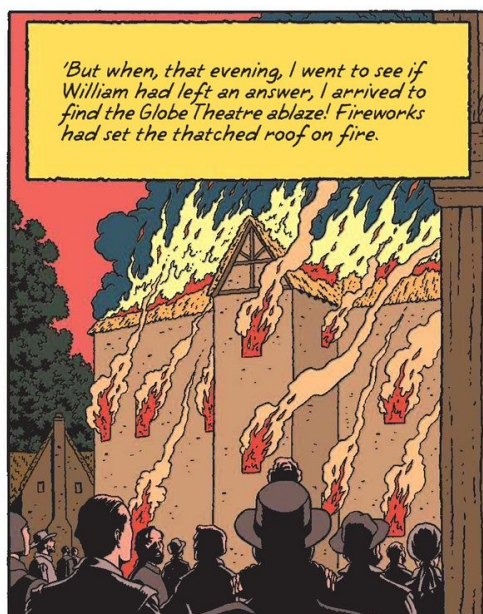
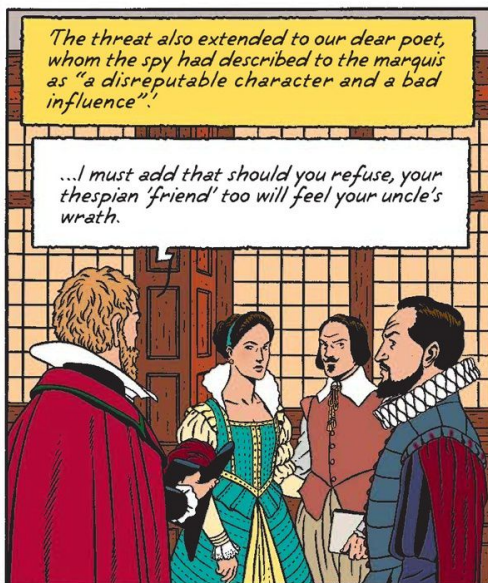
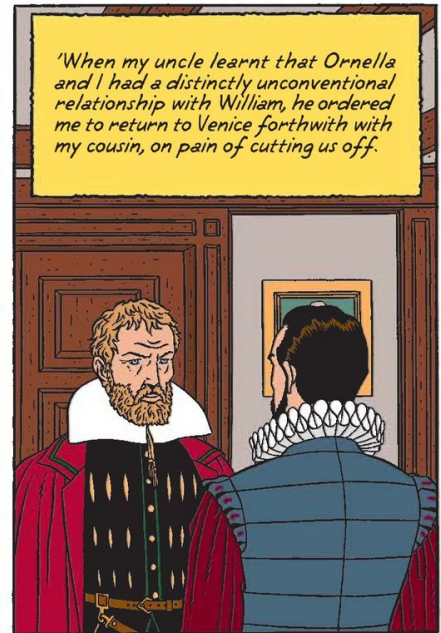
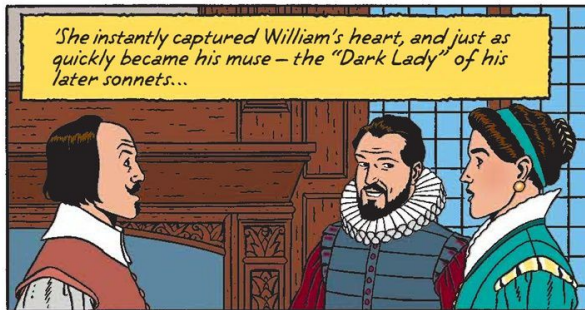
Between 1594 and 1596 came the plays Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice... Then, in 1603, James I succeeded Elizabeth I and our two writers became court favourites.

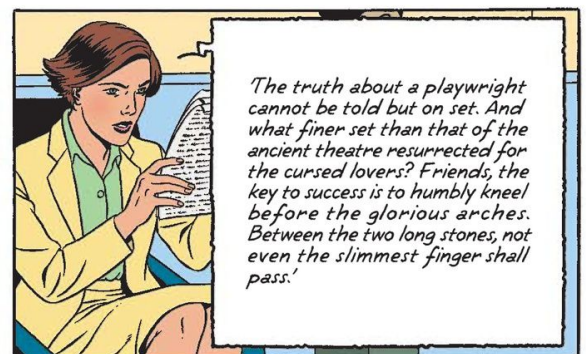
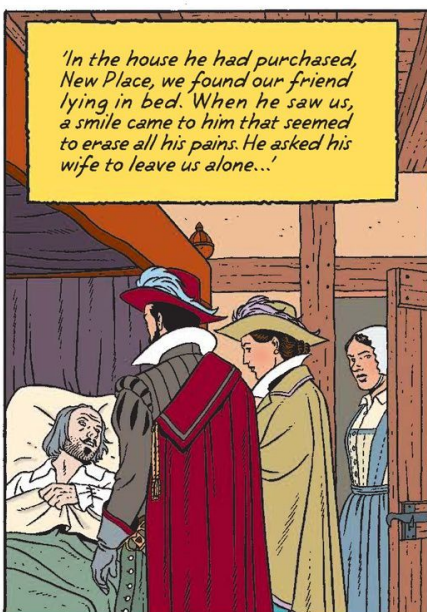
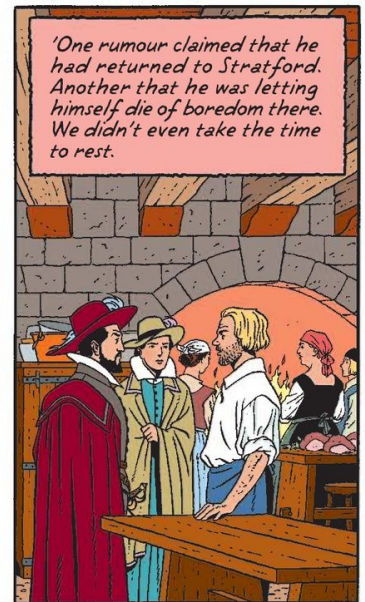
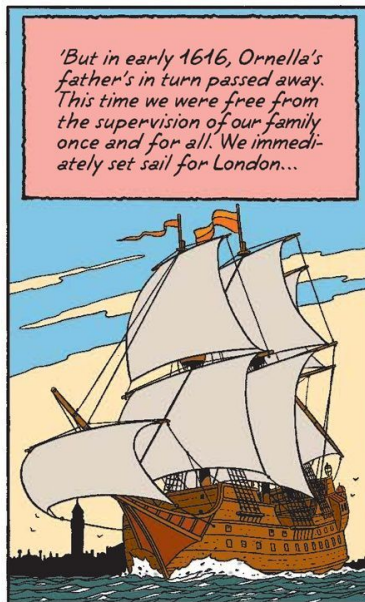


There followed more masterpieces: Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, to name just the most famous ones!



Ah, but this is new... Listen to this, Professor!







There's a plethora of lovers in Shakespeare's works!

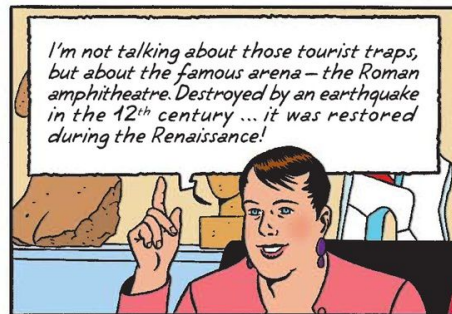


Perhaps, but two of them remain far better known than any others... Romeo and Juliet!



Yes, of course! The lovers of Verona! And what is it you can find in Verona?

I read that you can visit the supposed houses of Capulet and Montague... But no one knows if those places existed in Shakespeare's time.



I'm not talking about those tourist traps, but about the famous arena – the Roman amphitheatre. Destroyed by an earthquake in the 12th century ... it was restored during the Renaissance!



Hence the line: 'the ancient theatre resurrected'. By Jove! You're right!



And if the 'key to success' refers to one of the three keys mentioned in the first message ... it works!

As for the glorious arches of the riddle, you can't miss them – they make up the entire structure. You'll have to find out which ones are meant.



There isn't a moment to lose. What's the quickest way to get to Verona?

Not so fast!



Nice to see you again, old buddy!

I don't believe we've been introduced, but the way you came bursting in suggests you have never been taught proper manners.



I see you're still as good at making big speeches as you are at solving riddles, Professor!

Sharkey*!?

*SEE THE MYSTERY OF THE GREAT PYRAMID AND SOS METEORS



You recognise me. I'm touched... I'd especially like to thank you for your brilliant deductions – they're going to save me a lot of time. Now if you wouldn't mind turning around...



I need a few hours' head start on you.

Ow!

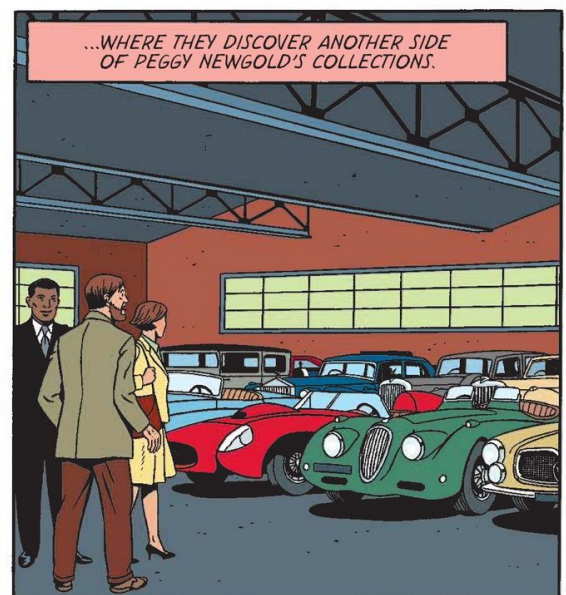
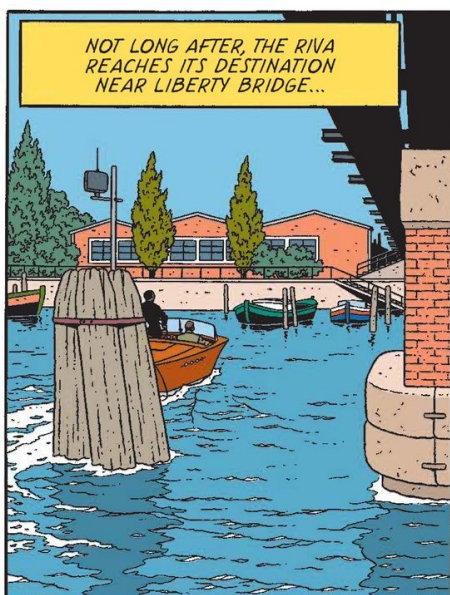
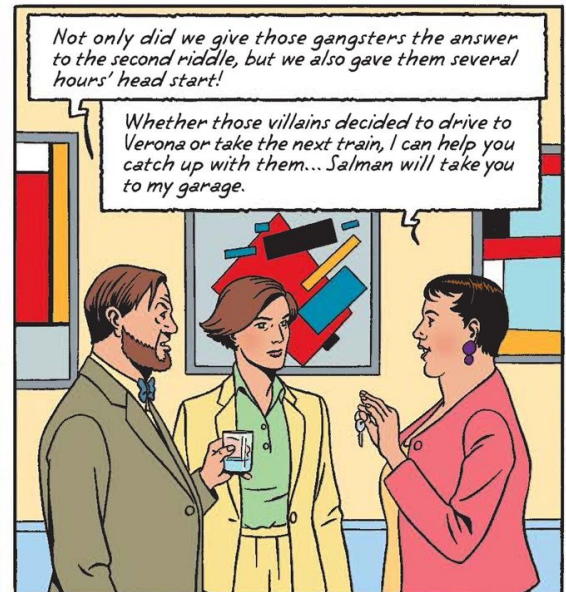


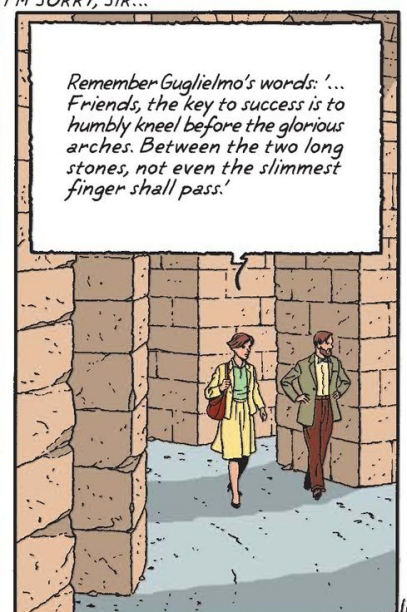
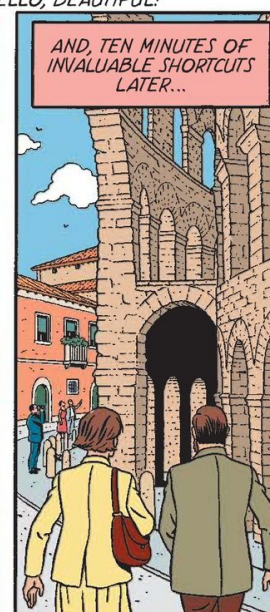
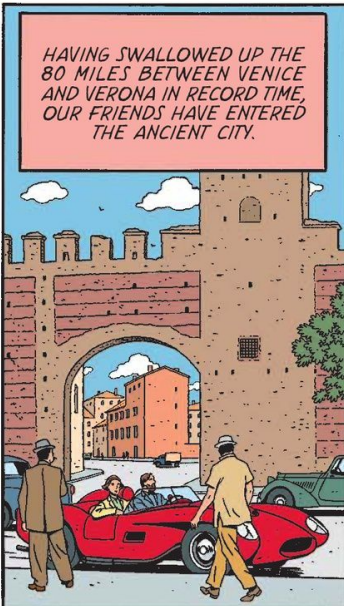
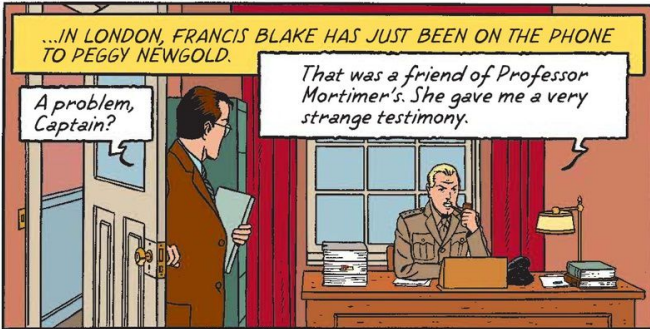
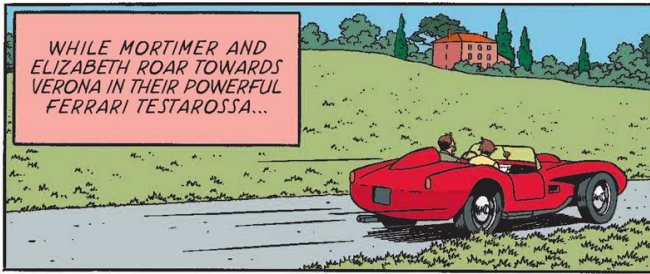
I hope you'll forgive us if we don't stay for tea, ladies. We have some urgent business to deal with.

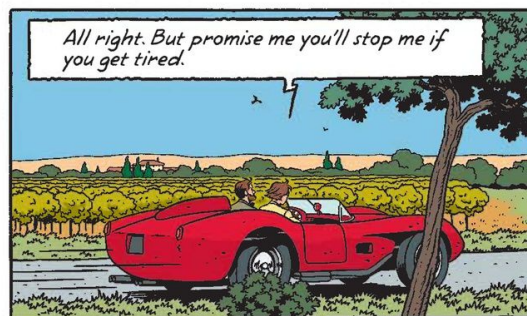
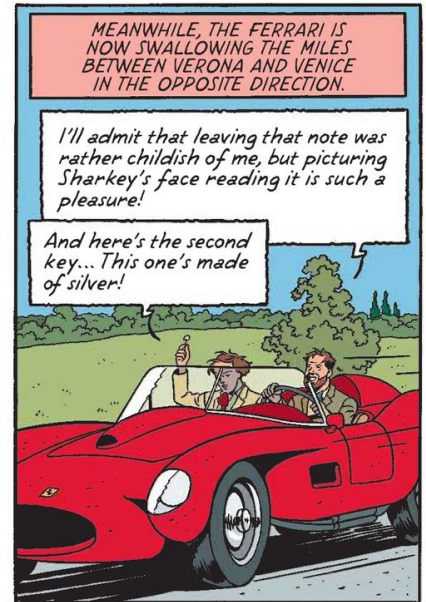


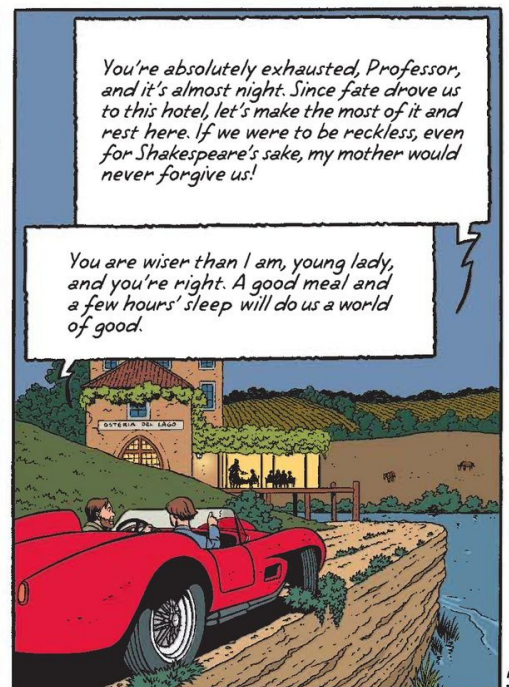
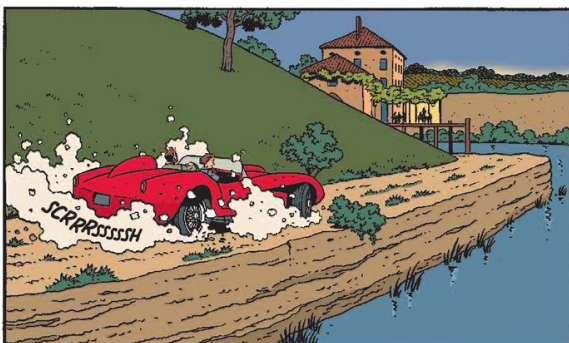
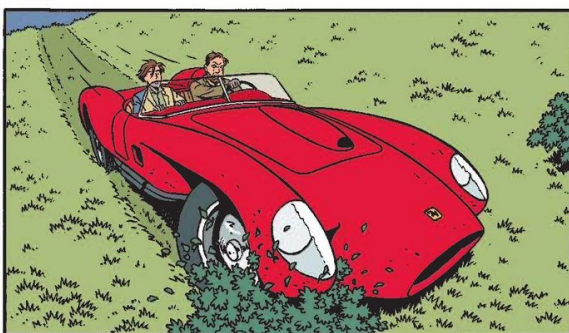
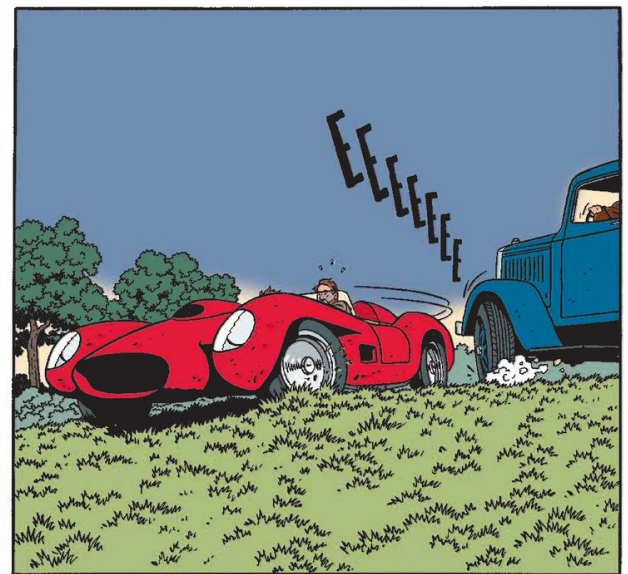
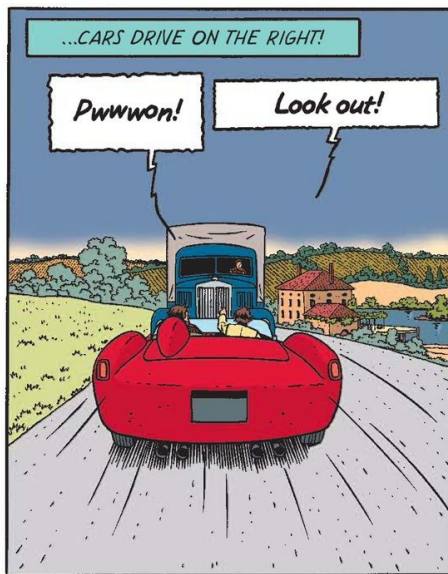
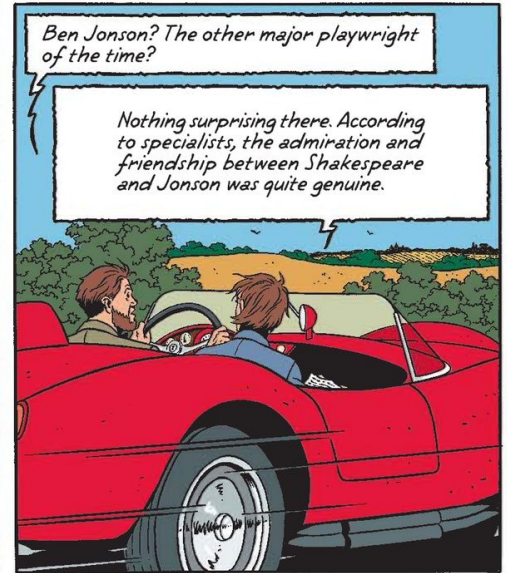
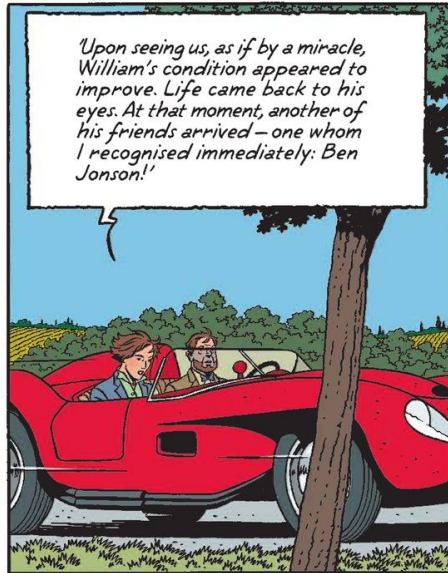
SHARKEY AND FREDDY IMMEDIATELY RETURN TO THE DOCK, WHERE A WATER TAXI AWAITS THEM.

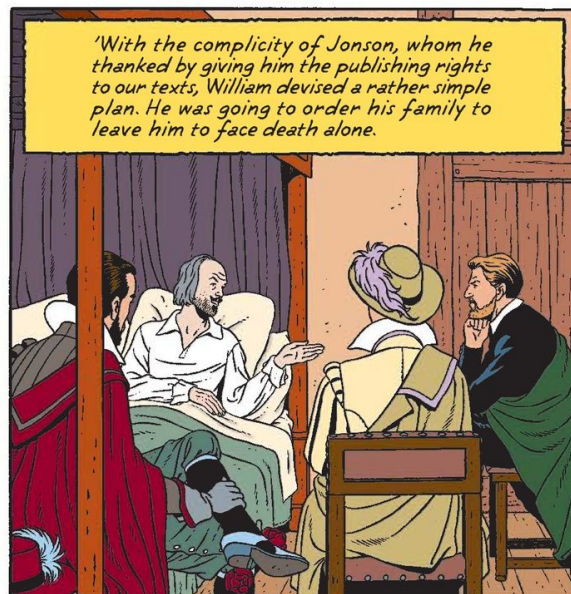
Start the engine, driver! Take us somewhere we can rent a car.



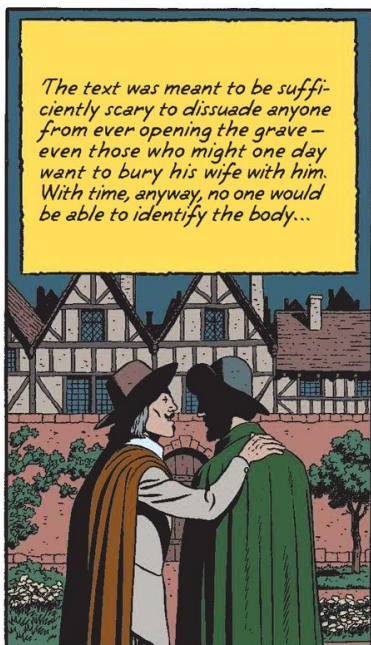
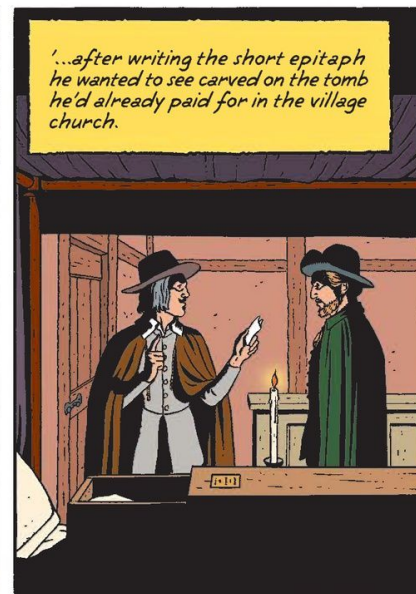
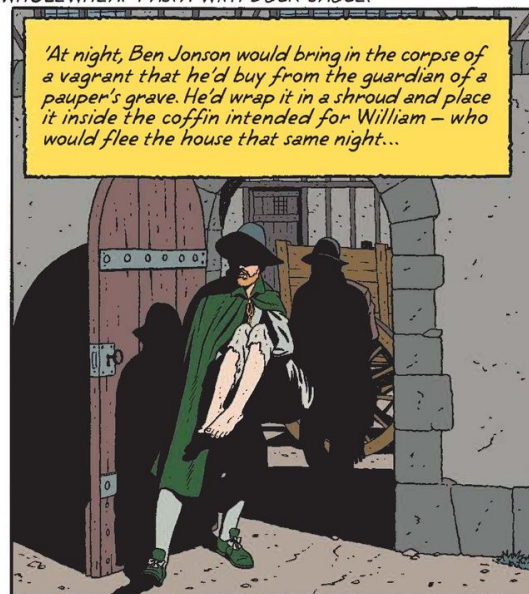
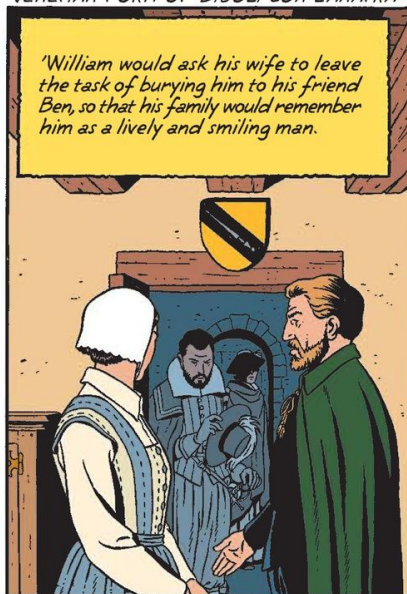


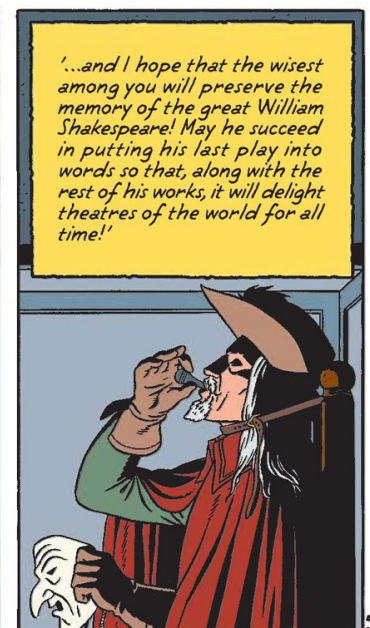
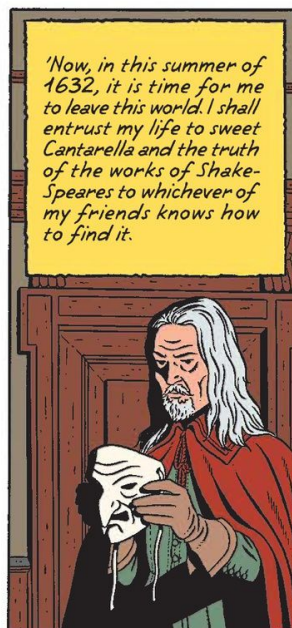
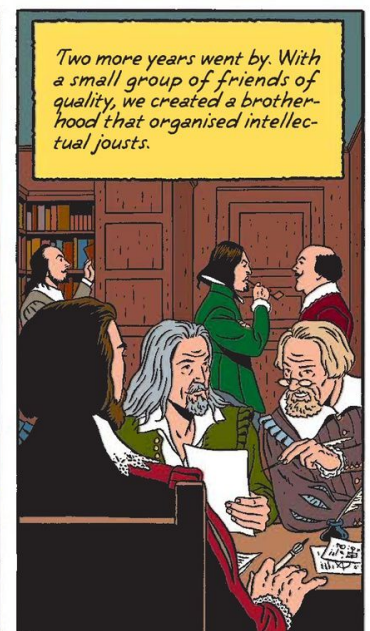
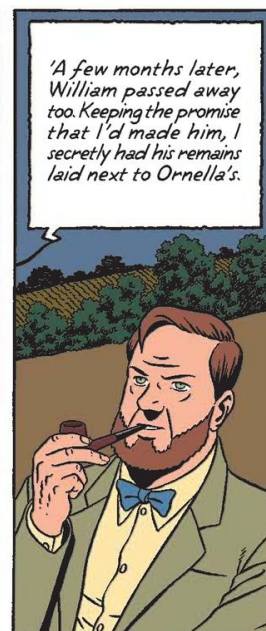
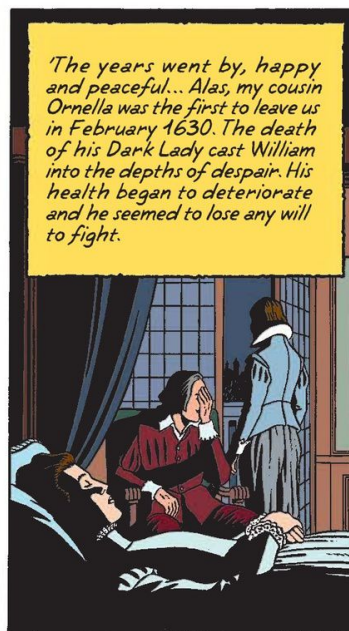
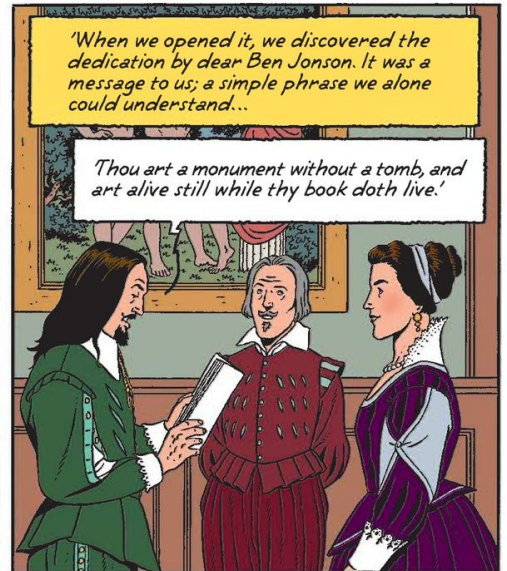
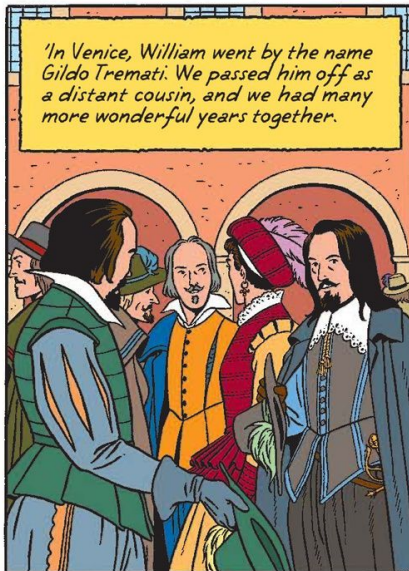






*VENETIAN FORM OF BIGOLI CON L'ANATRA – WHOLEHEAT PASTA WITH DUCK SAUCE.







These pages corroborate the testimony that the marquis read to us yesterday – most likely the faithful Dino's. Do you remember?

Yes. The dinner invitation for an evening in August 1632. The absence of the host. The small earthquake that drove the guests away...



The mechanism got stuck. Guglielmo's guests were never able to play his planned game or investigate...

...and the truth remained buried until the ship's collision restarted the mechanism that made the bell ring.

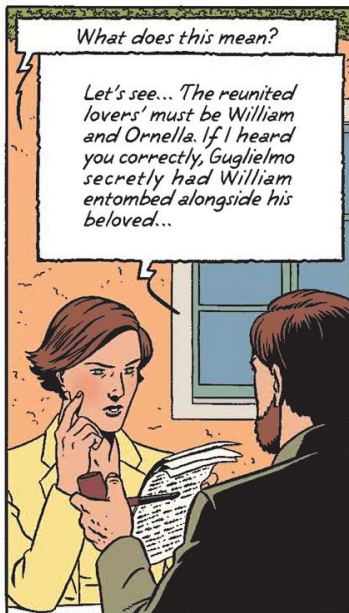


We still have to find the third key. There should be another riddle at the end of the text, shouldn't there?

Indeed there is...



To whoever reads these lines and will be daring enough to brave the dark eye that protects the reunited lovers: know that the last key of knowledge awaits at the gates of Hell, in the last capital of a bygone world!



What does this mean?

Let's see... The reunited lovers' must be William and Ornella. If I heard you correctly, Guglielmo secretly had William entombed alongside his beloved...



Ornella da Spiri! Where could she have been buried ... if not in the family vault of such an ancient and noble line?!

Logical, my dear! We need to call the marquis!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

The marquis just confirmed that since the 14th century, the da Spiri have had a family vault in the Basilica of San Francesco in ... Ravenna.



Ravenna! The last capital of the Roman Empire! In other words ... 'a bygone world'!

...And according to the marquis, it's also where Dante is buried – author of ... the *Inferno*!* It all fits! We have to go to Ravenna!



I must confess I'm exhausted. It's a fairly long drive to Ravenna... Let's get a few hours' sleep, as we have practically no hope left of bringing proof back to London in time.



All right. But we leave for Ravenna at dawn. You never know what helpful nudge fate might send our way.

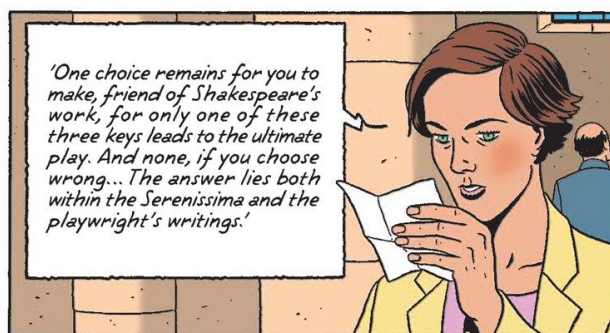
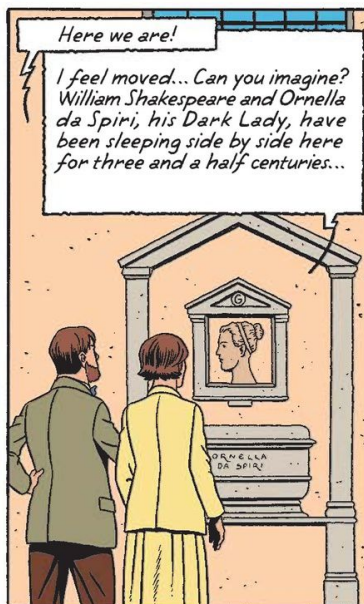
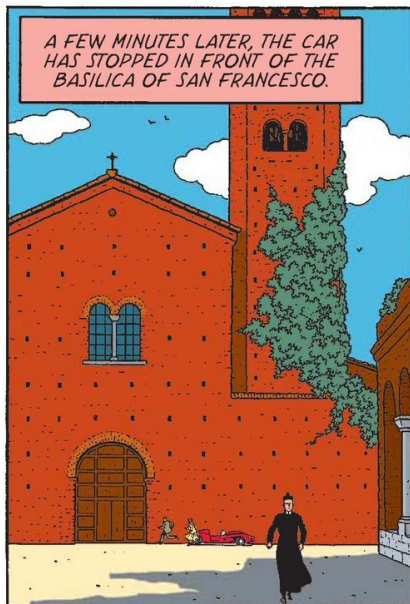


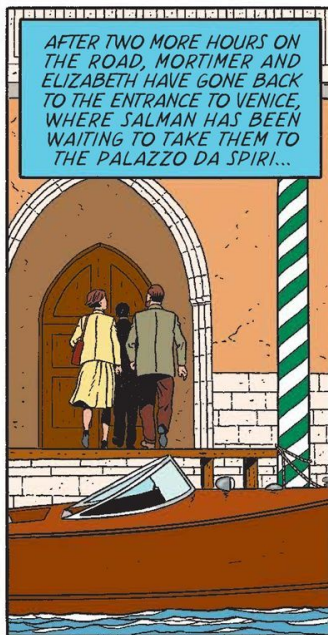
I admire your unwavering optimism. Just as I understand the fondness and admiration that my mother has for you!

Your culture and intelligence are matched only by your kindness, Elizabeth. Sleep well.

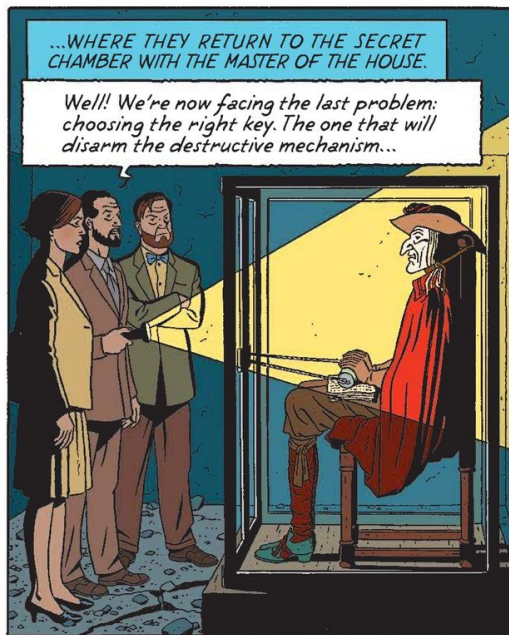


Goodnight, Professor.





AFTER TWO MORE HOURS ON THE ROAD, MORTIMER AND ELIZABETH HAVE GONE BACK TO THE ENTRANCE TO VENICE, WHERE JALKAN HAS BEEN WAITING TO TAKE THEM TO THE PALAZZO DA SPIRI...



...WHERE THEY RETURN TO THE SECRET CHAMBER WITH THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

Well! We're now facing the last problem: choosing the right key. The one that will disarm the destructive mechanism...



...assuming the contents of that phial are still active after more than three centuries...

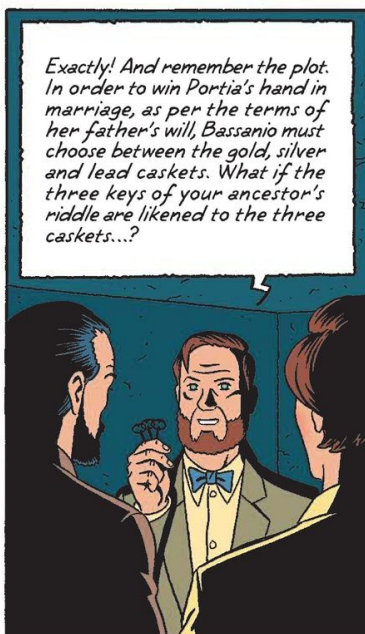
Let's not take any chances.



We had time to ponder the last riddle during the drive back. And if the answer to it 'lies both within the Serenissima and the playwright's writings', we thought that...



Of course! For a 'friend of Shakespeare's work', the most emblematic play 'within the Serenissima' is without a doubt *The Merchant of Venice*.



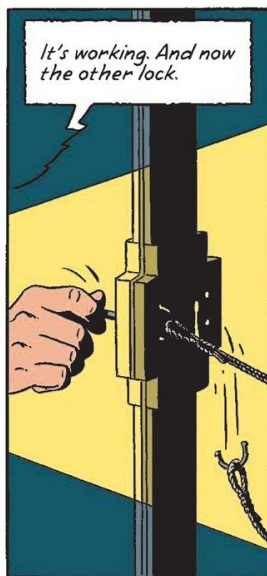
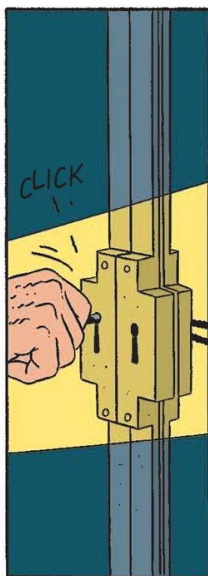
Exactly! And remember the plot. In order to win Portia's hand in marriage, as per the terms of her father's will, Bassanio must choose between the gold, silver and lead caskets. What if the three keys of your ancestor's riddle are likened to the three caskets...?



Then you would choose ... the lead key of course!



Will you do the honours, Marquis? After all, these documents belong to you.



It's working. And now the other lock.



First, let's remove this...



DESPITE ALL THE CARE THE MARQUIS PUTS INTO REMOVING THE GLASS TUBE, THE DUMMY'S HAND COMES OFF ... REVEALING HUMAN BONES.

Santo cielo!*

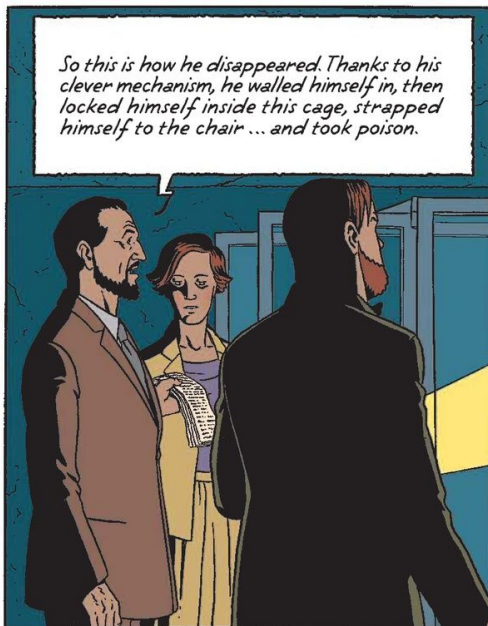
*GOOD HEAVENS!



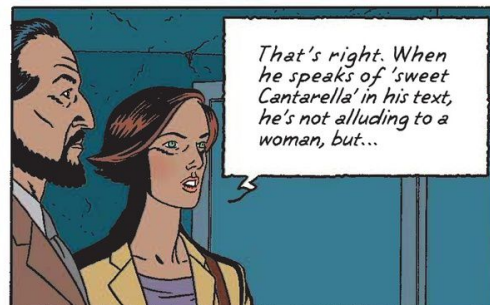
This... This isn't a dummy...



...it's my ancestor ... Guglielmo da Spiri!



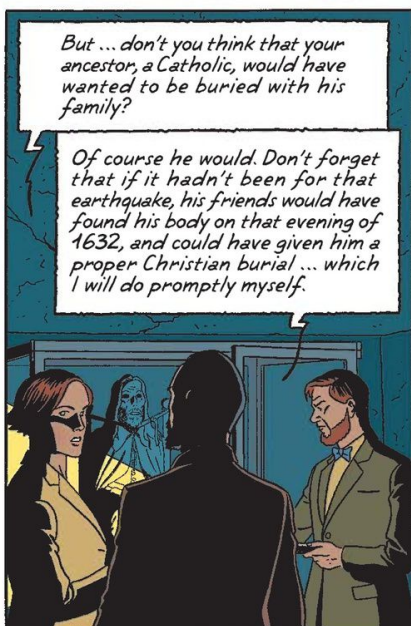
So this is how he disappeared. Thanks to his clever mechanism, he walled himself in, then locked himself inside this cage, strapped himself to the chair ... and took poison.



That's right. When he speaks of 'sweet Cantarella' in his text, he's not alluding to a woman, but...



...to a poison by the same name. By the end of the 15th century, the use of deadly poisons, especially cantarella, had become a sort of art in Venice...



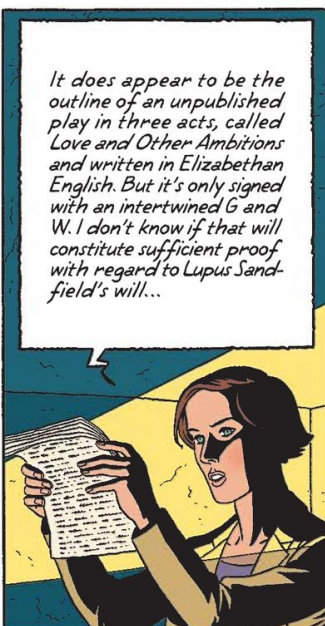
But ... don't you think that your ancestor, a Catholic, would have wanted to be buried with his family?

Of course he would. Don't forget that if it hadn't been for that earthquake, his friends would have found his body on that evening of 1632, and could have given him a proper Christian burial ... which I will do promptly myself.



So, Elizabeth? Are these pages the evidence that we were hoping for?

More or less...

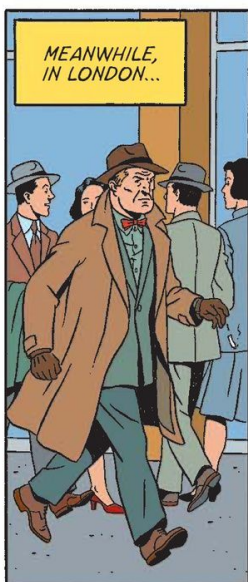


It does appear to be the outline of an unpublished play in three acts, called *Love and Other Ambitions* and written in Elizabethan English. But it's only signed with an intertwined G and W. I don't know if that will constitute sufficient proof with regard to Lupus Sandfield's will...

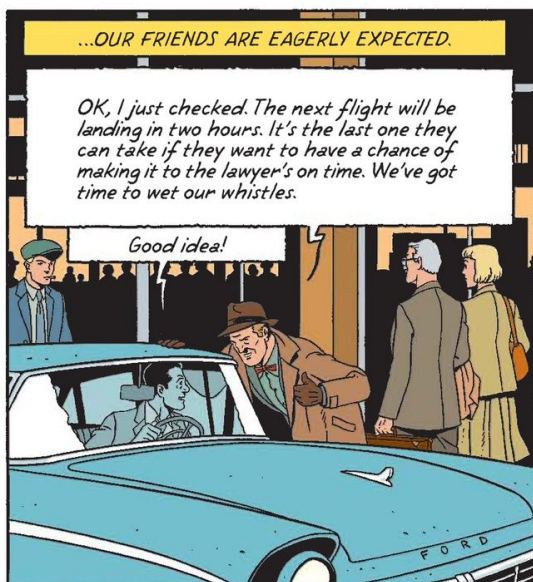


One thing at a time – the most urgent being to return to London immediately! We only have six hours left. I'll call Blake so he can organise our travel.

I'll take you to the airport with Salman. Avanti!



MEANWHILE, IN LONDON...



...OUR FRIENDS ARE EAGERLY EXPECTED.

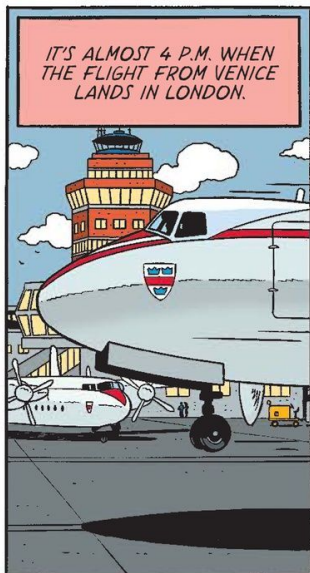
OK, I just checked. The next flight will be landing in two hours. It's the last one they can take if they want to have a chance of making it to the lawyer's on time. We've got time to wet our whistles.

Good idea!



AND AT THE SAME TIME AT MIS...

Well, gentlemen, since everyone knows what they have to do, all that's left is for me to wish you good luck!



IT'S ALMOST 4 P.M. WHEN THE FLIGHT FROM VENICE LANDS IN LONDON.



Dammit! They did it!...



Miss, sir... Anything special to declare?

Nothing special.



DAVID HONEYCHURCH, WHOM MORTIMER HAS RECOGNISED, DISCREETLY REACHES FOR A BLACK BRIEFCASE THAT IS IDENTICAL TO THE PROFESSOR'S.

Excellent. In that case, welcome to the United Kingdom.



MIS's cab is waiting for you outside as agreed. The driver is wearing a grey cap. Good luck, Professor.



I think that's the one...



Yes, sir, I see them.



Let's go.



I'll bet you anything that our shadows will make their move after the tunnel!

What did I tell you?!



Ha ha! It looks like you lost the game to an 'uneducated henchman', Professor. Still, you're kinda lucky. I wasn't ordered to get rid of you today.

Delighted to hear it, Mr Sharkey. I suppose this is what you want?...

SHARKEY GETS BACK IN THE FORD, WHICH HURTLES OFF.

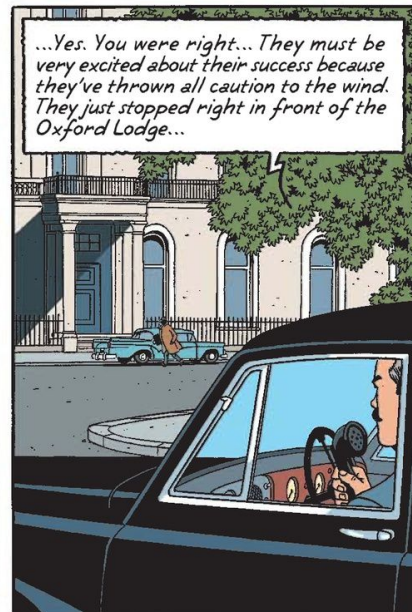
My colleagues will follow them discreetly. In the meantime, I'm taking you to the hospital where Mr Bridges, the solicitor, is waiting for you. Honeychurch should have already brought him the original documents.



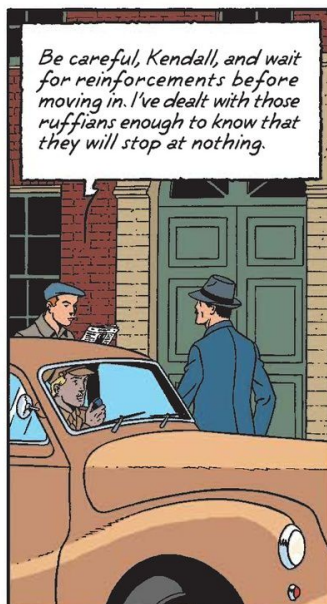
Hello, Captain?...



...Kendall here... Yes, everything is going as planned...



...Yes. You were right... They must be very excited about their success because they've thrown all caution to the wind. They just stopped right in front of the Oxford Lodge...



Be careful, Kendall, and wait for reinforcements before moving in. I've dealt with those ruffians enough to know that they will stop at nothing.



Right, I must leave you. We've arrived at Lord Sandfield's. It's time to put our other bird in his cage...



MEANWHILE, MORTIMER AND ELIZABETH HAVE REACHED THE HOSPITAL WHERE JUDE BRIDGES IS BEING TREATED - UNDER SPECIAL POLICE PROTECTION.

Wait for me, Professor! We're here now!



We only have a few minutes left. I don't want to take any more chances!



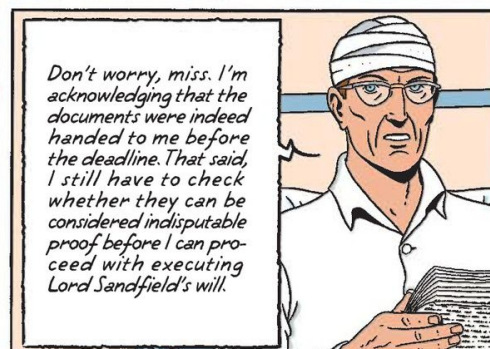
Mr Bridges! At last!



Ah! I see that David's given you the original documents. Have you had time to read them?



Well, sir? Are the documents admissible? We're still on time, aren't we?



Don't worry, miss. I'm acknowledging that the documents were indeed handed to me before the deadline. That said, I still have to check whether they can be considered indisputable proof before I can proceed with executing Lord Sandfield's will.

MEANWHILE...

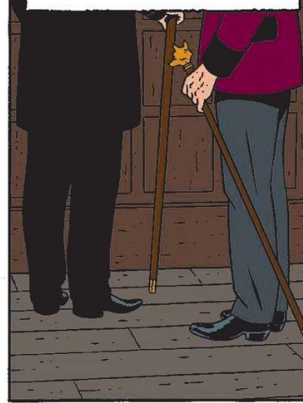
I just spoke to Inspector Kendall, Lord Sandfield. The thieves acted as expected. They completely missed the switching of briefcases at the airport, where my deputy was playing customs officer...



As we speak, they are surrounded by the police. There is little doubt that the theft was ordered by Sir Walter of Oxford.



Our investigation of Countess Abigail of Chatham revealed that she was born Abigail De Vere. An authentic, though penniless, descendant of the original Earls of Oxford...



...and a prominent member of the Oxford Lodge, bastion of the anti-Stratfordians. It was she who informed Sir Walter of this entire business, and it was the latter who hired the bandits to retrieve the documents. You can rest assured that we will obtain their confessions.



The original documents should currently be in the hands of Mr Bridges the solicitor, who's still under close protection at the hospital... They'll have arrived in the nick of time, thus respecting the conditions of Lord Lupus Sandfield's will. I wanted to let you know in person.

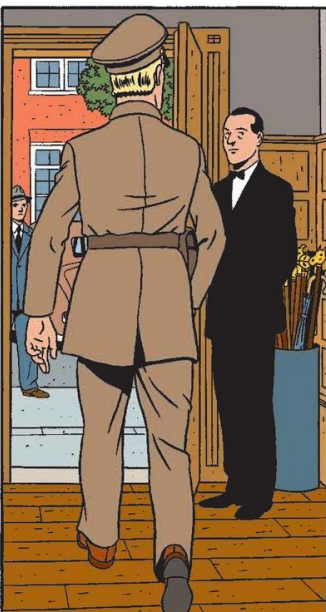
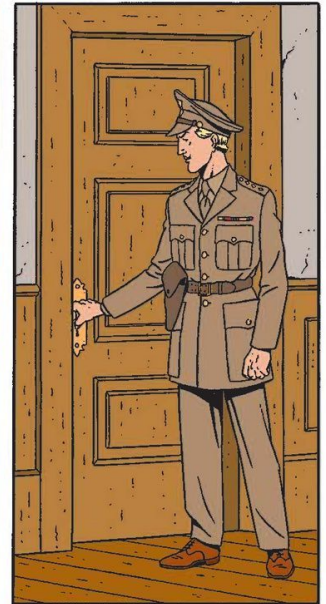


Very good, Captain. What must happen will happen.



And now I'll bid you farewell, Lord Sandfield. Don't get up; I know the way out.

Thank you again for informing me yourself, Captain. Goodbye.



Sorry, but I'm not leaving ... and I'm going to explain why...



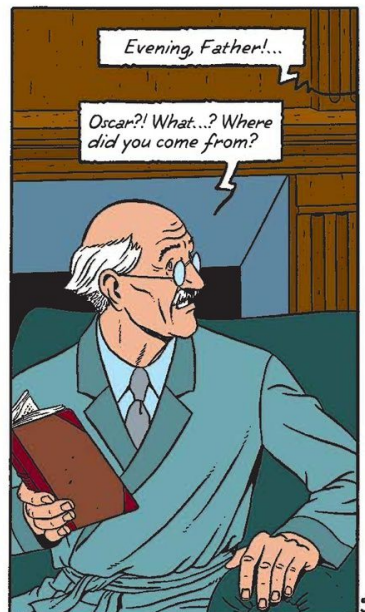
Eeeeeekkr...

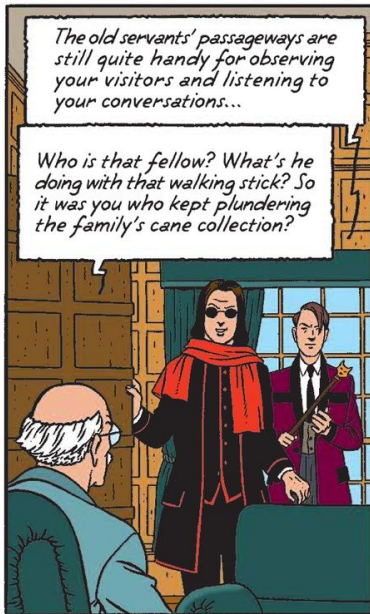
?



Evening, Father!...

Oscar?! What...? Where did you come from?





The old servants' passageways are still quite handy for observing your visitors and listening to your conversations...

Who is that fellow? What's he doing with that walking stick? So it was you who kept plundering the family's cane collection?



This fellow has turned out to be very useful for handling certain tasks unworthy of our rank. Relieving your gentry friends of their belongings, for example...



After all, it's not my fault if you and your father allowed the family fortune to go up in smoke, is it?

How dare you!? My father wasn't responsible for the wars that...



Don't bother. I'm going to have to curtail this conversation...

...and let Dickie break in through the window...

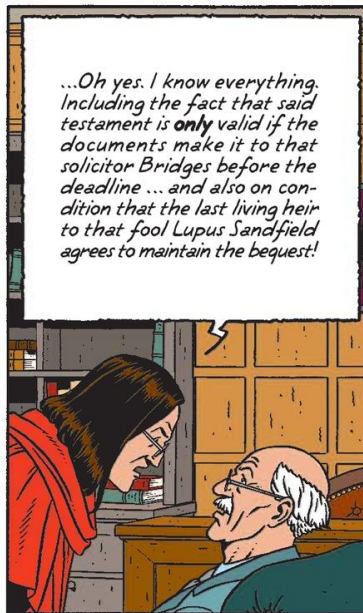


...before accidentally killing you during a burglary gone wrong. We have less than ten minutes left...

Kill me?! But... You're even more insane than I thought!



Insane? Not in the least, dear Father. Rather, it's you who have lost all reason - sacrificing this family's future to a century-old testament, to a stupid question of honour.



...Oh yes. I know everything. Including the fact that said testament is only valid if the documents make it to that solicitor Bridges before the deadline ... and also on condition that the last living heir to that fool Lupus Sandfield agrees to maintain the bequest!



Well, I signed that document! Your plan has failed, Oscar!

Wrong, Father!...



...In a minute you'll be dead. In the eyes of the law, I will immediately become the last heir... And it's not yet five o'clock, and I didn't sign anything, and that money will be legally mine!



By Saint George! You're my son, Oscar! Surely you're not going to...

Hurry up, Dickie. This is getting tiresome...

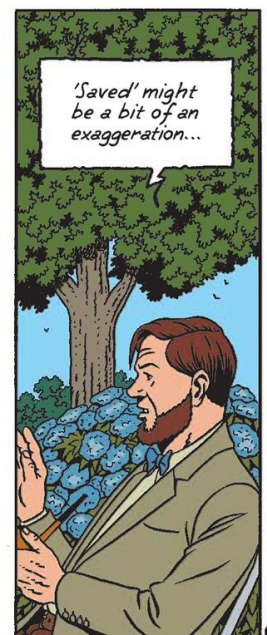
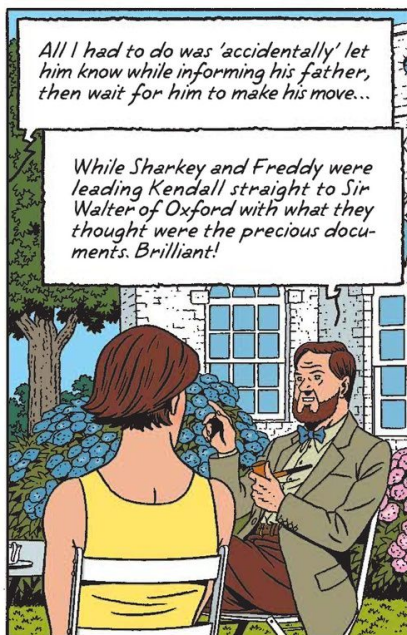
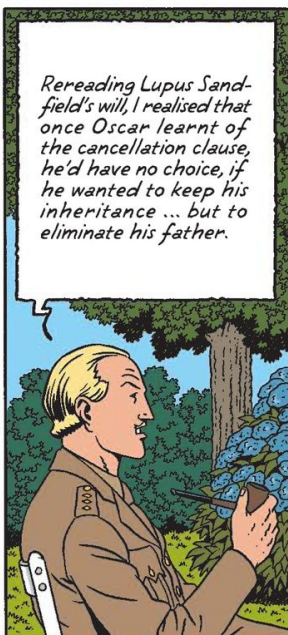
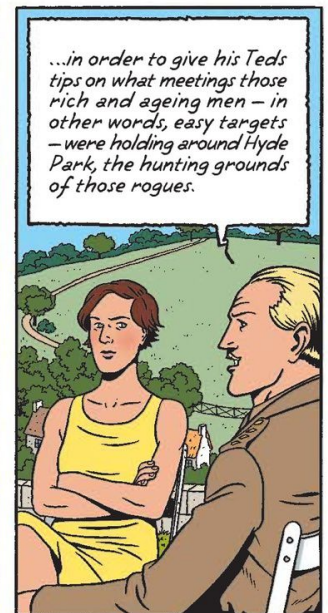
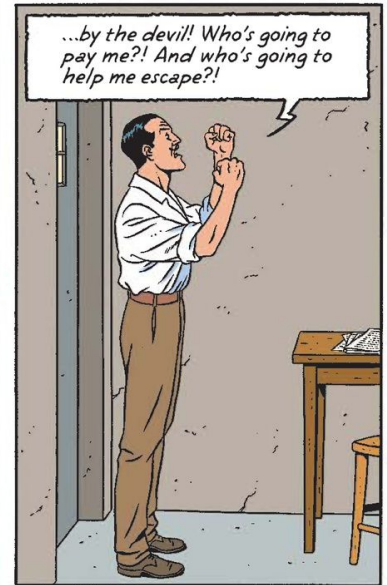
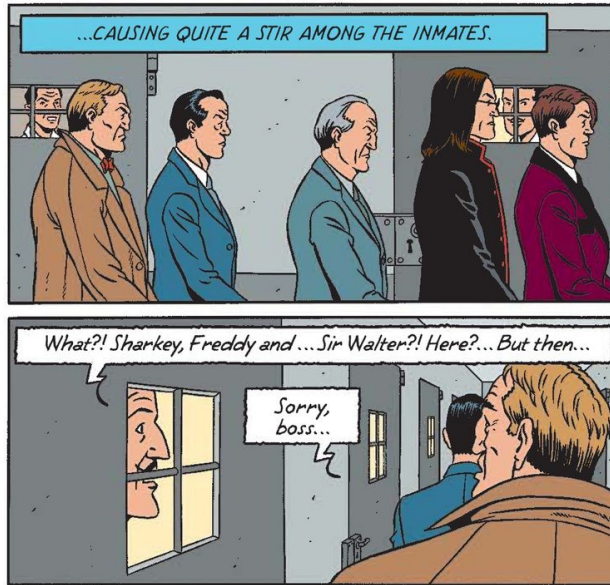
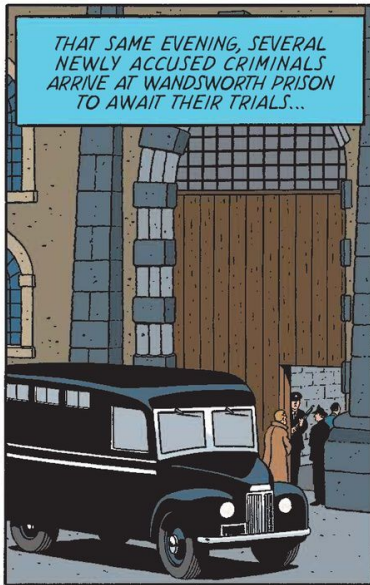


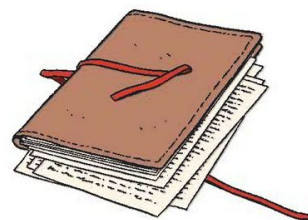
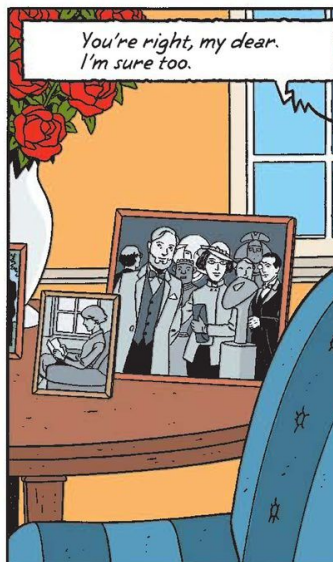
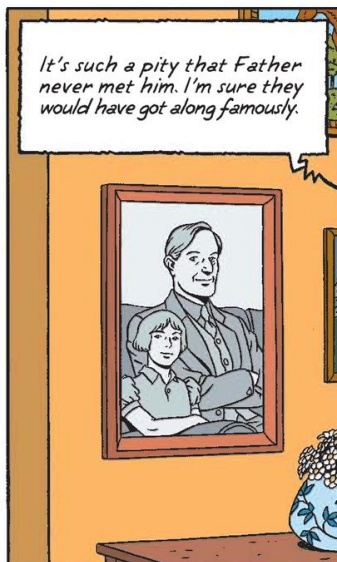
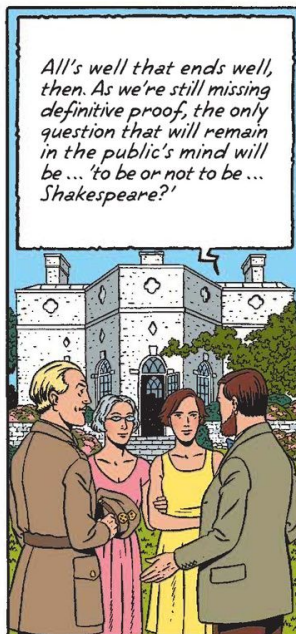
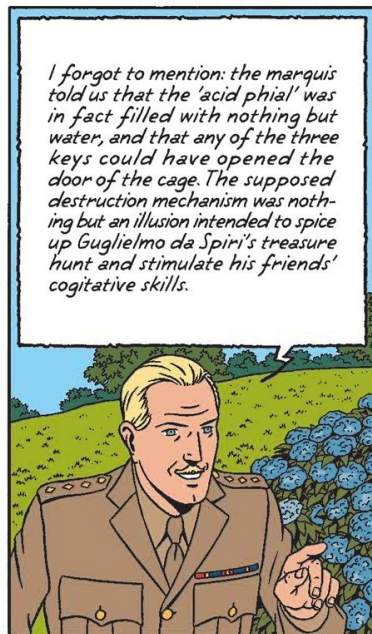
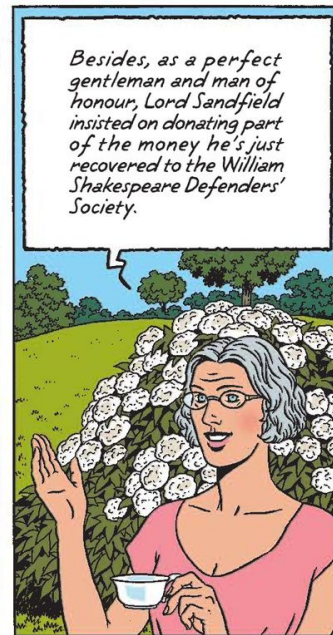
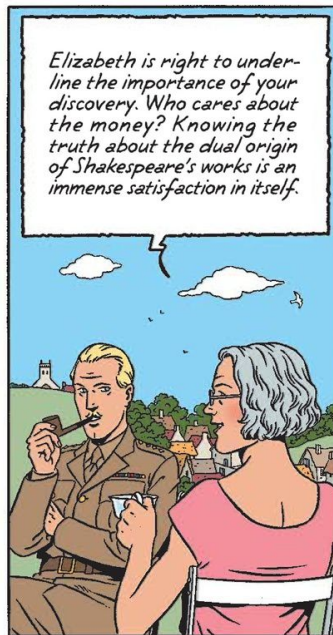
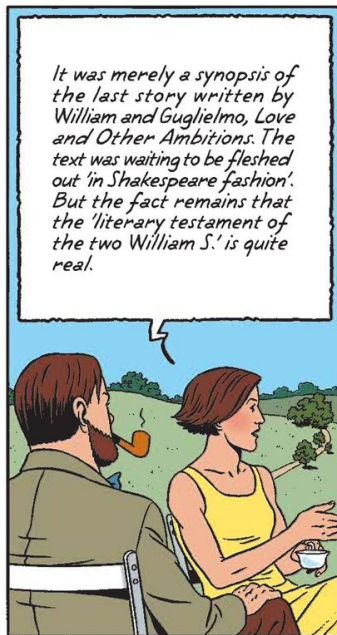
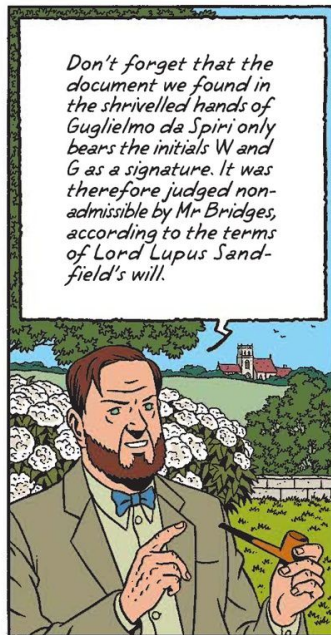
Aaah!



Forgive my fake exit earlier, Lord Sandfield. But it was in your interest, as I'm sure you'll agree.

Hunnnh!...





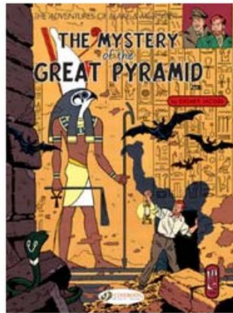
THE END

yves Sente
Juuland
Madeleine de Mille

THE ADVENTURES OF BLAKE & MORTIMER



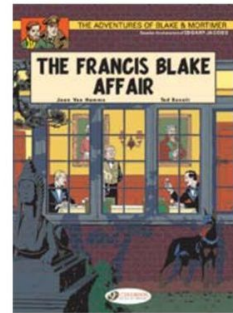
1-The Yellow "M"
EDGAR P. JACOBS



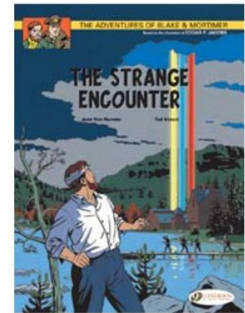
2-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



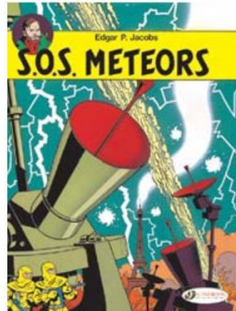
3-The Mystery of the Great Pyramid Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



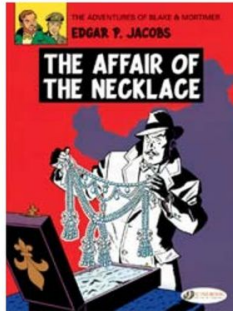
4-The Francis Blake Affair
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



5-The Strange Encounter
VAN HAMME - BENOIT



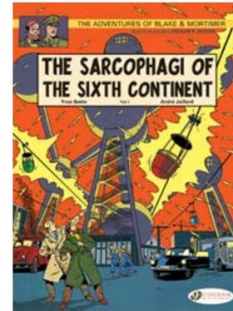
6-S.O.S. Meteors
EDGAR P. JACOBS



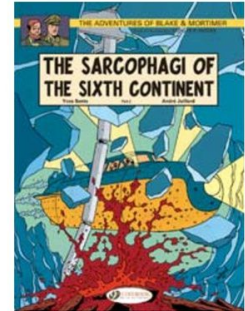
7-The Affair of the Necklace
EDGAR P. JACOBS



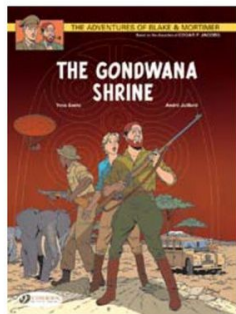
8-The Voronov Plot
SENTE - JUILLARD



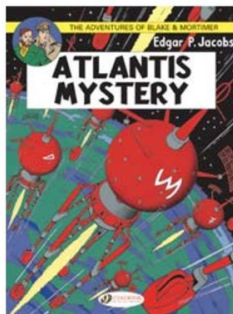
9-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1
SENTE - JUILLARD



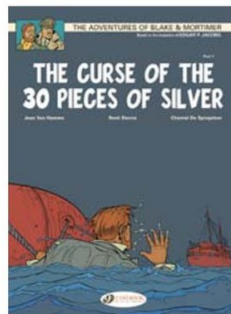
10-The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2
SENTE - JUILLARD



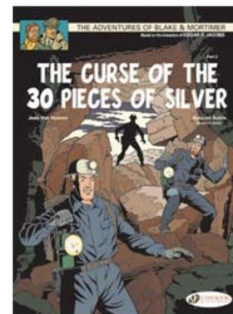
11-The Gondwana Shrine
SENTE - JUILLARD



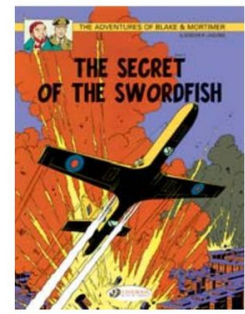
12-Atlantis Mystery
EDGAR P. JACOBS



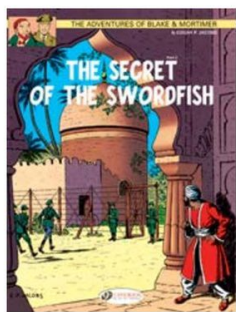
13-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 1
VAN HAMME - STERNE - DE SPIEGELEER



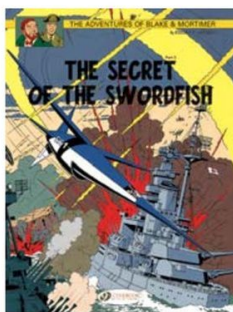
14-The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver Part 2
VAN HAMME - AUBIN - SCHREDER



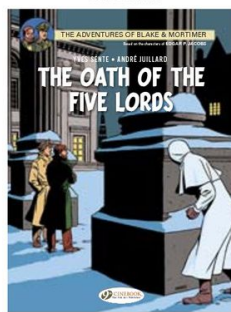
15-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



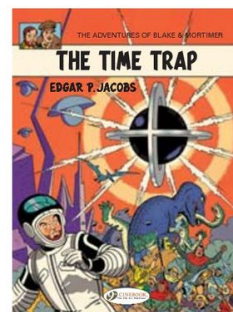
16-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 2
EDGAR P. JACOBS



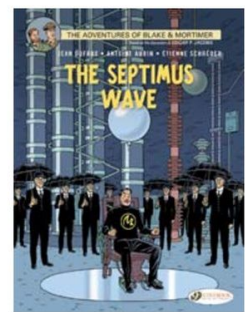
17-The Secret of the Swordfish Part 3
EDGAR P. JACOBS



18-The Oath of the Five Lords
SENTE - JUILLARD



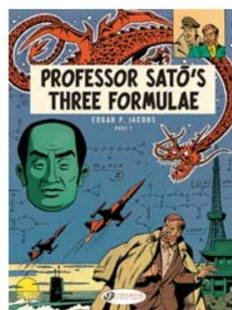
19-The Time Trap
EDGAR P. JACOBS



20-The Septimus Wave
DUFAUX - AUBIN - SCHREDER



20-Plutarch's Staff
SENTE - JUILLARD



22-Professor Satō's Three Formulae
Part 1
EDGAR P. JACOBS



23-Professor Satō's Three Formulae
Part 2
JACOBS - DE MOOR



24-The Testament of William S.
SENTE - JUILLARD

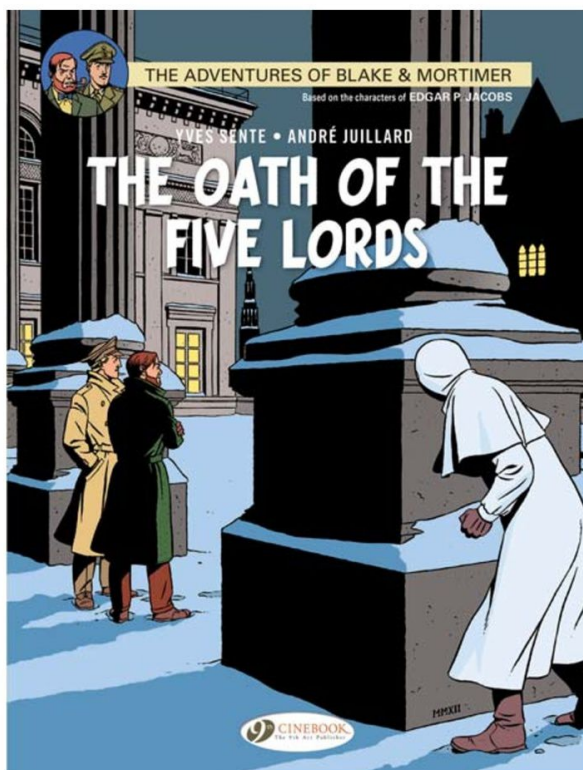
THE OATH OF THE FIVE LORDS

Yves Sente

André Juillard

Based on the characters of **EDGAR P. JACOBS**

© Editions Blake & Mortimer / Studio Jacobs (Dargaud-Lombard s.a.) - Sente & Juillard



1919. Colonel Lawrence — Lawrence of Arabia — has an unpleasant meeting with an MI5 agent who confiscates his manuscript of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. 35 years later, Oxford is shocked by a series of burglaries at the Ashmolean Museum, at the same time as Blake learns of the death of an old friend. The captain begins an investigation, while Mortimer looks into the thefts... But what dark connection does all of this have with Lawrence and Blake's own past?



© Rita Scaglia / Dargaud



André Juillard is a celebrated artist with a career spanning more than 35 years. He has worked on famous series such as "Les Sept Vies de L'Épervier" and "Masquerouge." In 1996, he was awarded the Grand Prix at the Angoulême festival.

Yves Sente began writing scripts in 1999. He has already acquired considerable clout, being chosen as successor to **Jean Van Hamme** for the series "Thorgal" (with **Grzegorz Rosinski**) and "XIII" (with **Iouri Jigounov**), and working with **Jean Van Hamme** on "Blake & Mortimer."



© E. Chameux / Dargaud



HAVING RUN TO THE FRONT DESK, THE CAPTAIN REQUESTS A CALL BE PLACED TO THE NUMBER PROFESSOR MORTIMER GAVE HIM...

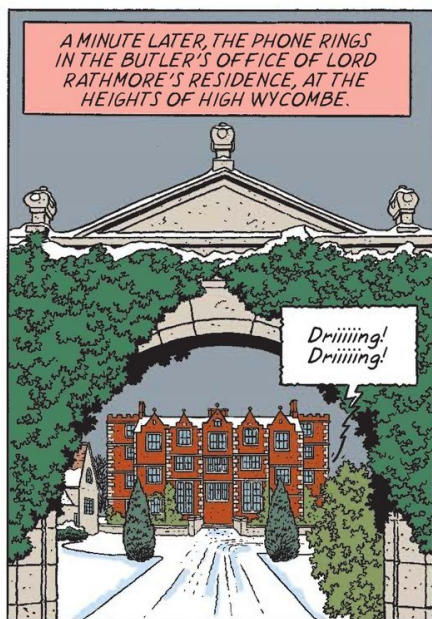
Ah, it's ringing. I'll pass it on to you...



Philip, listen to me ... I don't have time to explain anything at the moment. Just one thing: most likely there'll be other thefts at the Ashmolean, but I don't know what items will be targeted. Make sure surveillance is increased at the museum until I arrive. I'll call you back as soon as I can. See you soon!



I don't want to impose on you, miss, but could you place another call for me? It's a matter of life and death!



A MINUTE LATER, THE PHONE RINGS IN THE BUTLER'S OFFICE OF LORD RATHMORE'S RESIDENCE, AT THE HEIGHTS OF HIGH WYCOMBE.

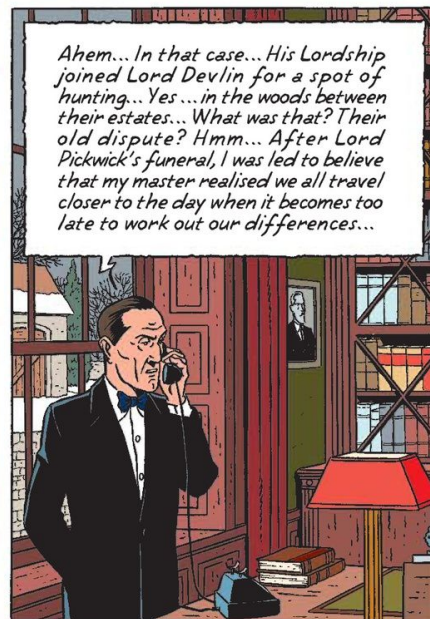
Drilling!
Drilling!



I'm sorry, sir. His Lordship is out... Sorry, sir, but I'm not authorised to tell you... I beg your pardon?!...



For the last time, for heaven's sake! I'm Captain Blake of M15. This is an official call. It's a question of life and death for Lord Rathmore. I must know where he is - and quickly!



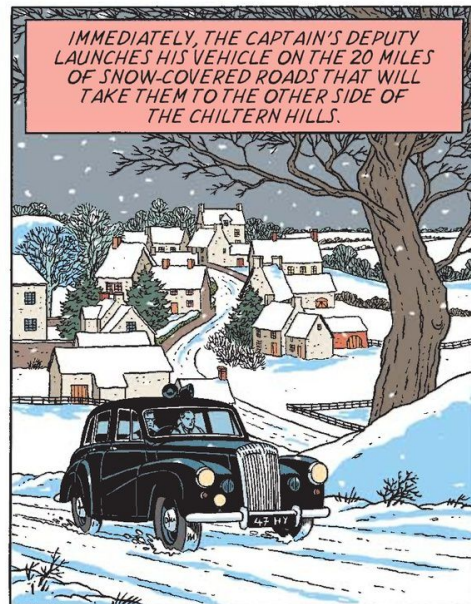
Ahem... In that case... His Lordship joined Lord Devlin for a spot of hunting... Yes ...in the woods between their estates... What was that? Their old dispute? Hmm... After Lord Pickwick's funeral, I was led to believe that my master realised we all travel closer to the day when it becomes too late to work out our differences...



I beg you, try to make Lord Rathmore come back to the house. With or without Lord Devlin. But don't leave him alone until I get there, do you understand?... Perfect... I'm counting on you.



Hop in, David! I'll give you a rough outline of the case during the half-hour you have to get us to High Wycombe!



IMMEDIATELY, THE CAPTAIN'S DEPUTY LAUNCHES HIS VEHICLE ON THE 20 MILES OF SNOW-COVERED ROADS THAT WILL TAKE THEM TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHILTERN HILLS.



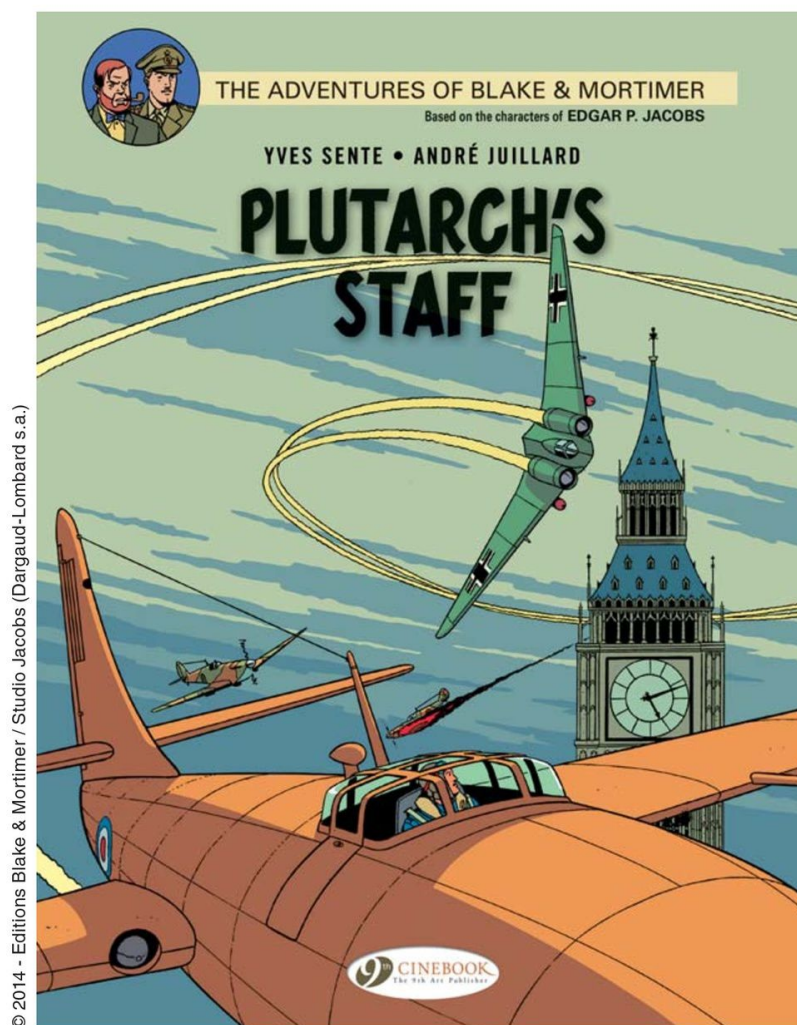
Yves Sente

PLUTARCH'S STAFF

André Juillard

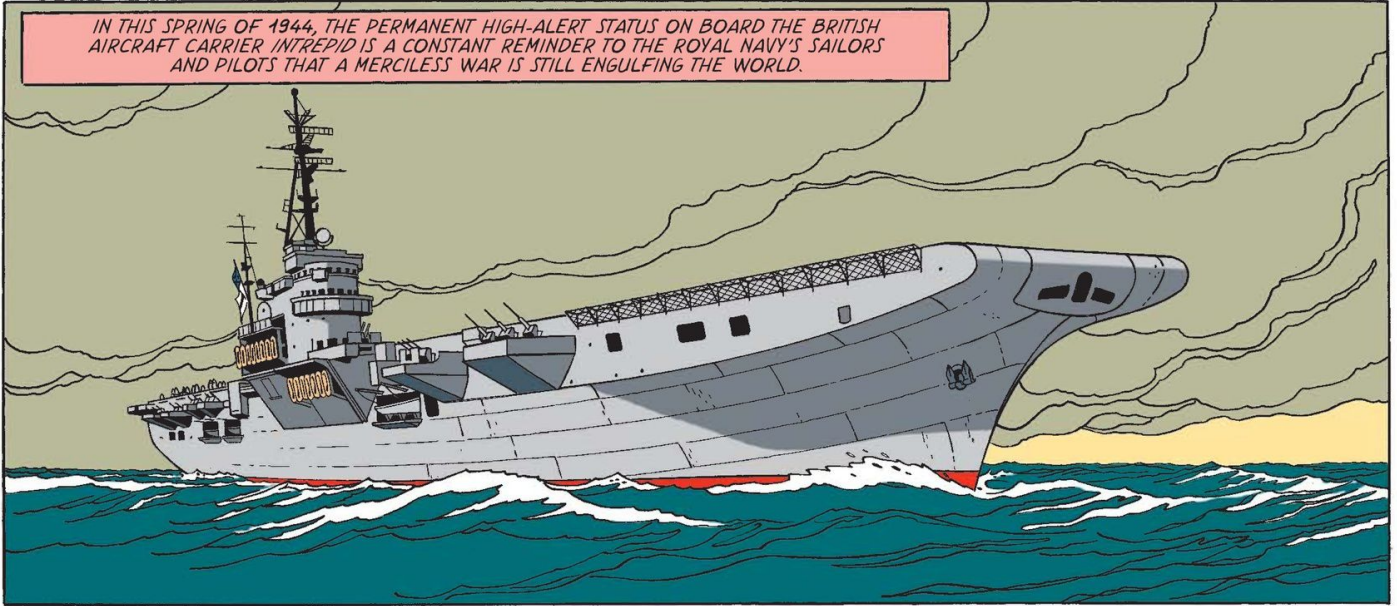
Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS

**BLAKE AND MORTIMER MUST HELP END A WAR ...
TO PREPARE FOR THE NEXT ONE.
OUR TWO HEROES' FIRST MISSION TOGETHER.**



1944. England is still locked in a struggle to the death with Nazi Germany. But already a new threat looms among the peaks of the Himalayas. For now, though, Squadron Leader Blake, having saved London from a German prototype, is assigned to a top secret mission, during which he meets with an old friend he hasn't seen since India: Philip Mortimer. Soon, the pair are introduced to an officer working for Allied Intelligence: Colonel Olrik...

IN THIS SPRING OF 1944, THE PERMANENT HIGH-ALERT STATUS ON BOARD THE BRITISH AIRCRAFT CARRIER *INTREPID* IS A CONSTANT REMINDER TO THE ROYAL NAVY'S SAILORS AND PILOTS THAT A MERCILESS WAR IS STILL ENGULFING THE WORLD.



ON THE BRIDGE, CAPTAIN HAMILTON IS RECEIVING THE LATEST MISSION REPORT FROM SQUADRON LEADER FRANCIS BLAKE, RAF.

Three submarines sunk! You and your fellows have done great work, Blake!



The men are particularly earnest, Captain. The imminent prospect of an Allied landing in France has seen to that!

Unfortunately, the Germans are expecting it too. The alarming concentration of U-boats off our coasts confirms it.

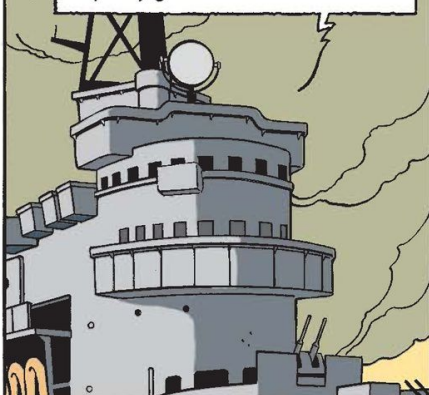


It is imperative that we destroy those killers if we want our troop carriers to have a chance of reaching the continent. And to do that, that new American towed sonar will come in very handy...



An American sonar?

It's top secret. Our allies have come up with a very low-frequency sound detector of previously unthinkable sensitivity. It should help us better detect underwater targets whose coordinates we can then forward to your fighter-bombers.



That state-of-the-art equipment is to be discreetly delivered to us out at sea by a Senegalese fishing boat, the *Diourbel*. As soon as it enters the U-boats' hunting grounds, your squadron will be in charge of its safety.



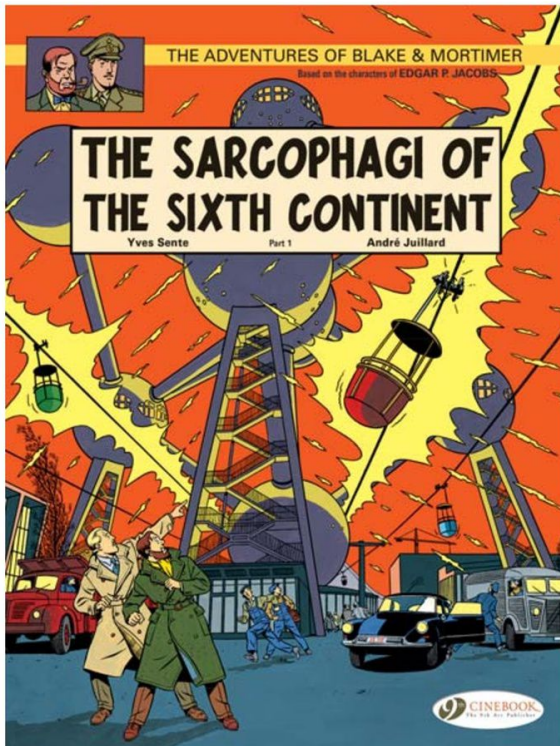
Captain! Urgent message from the Cabinet War Rooms!



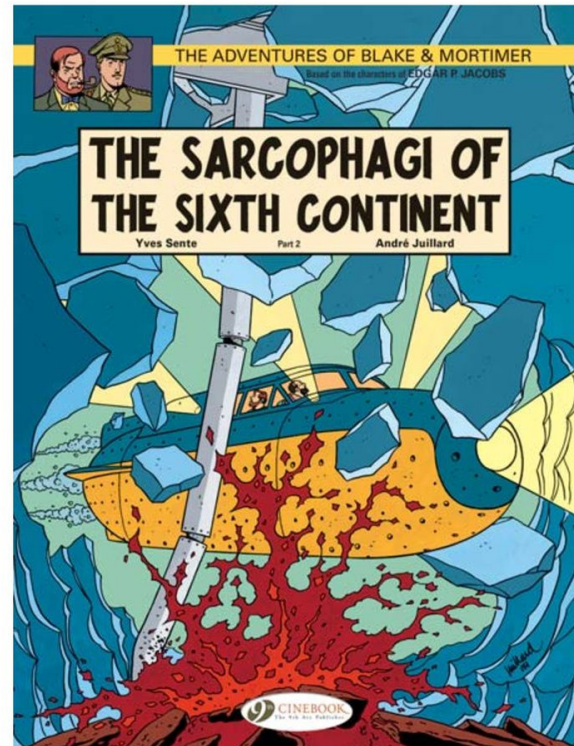


THE SARCOPHAGI OF THE SIXTH CONTINENT

Based on the characters of EDGAR P. JACOBS



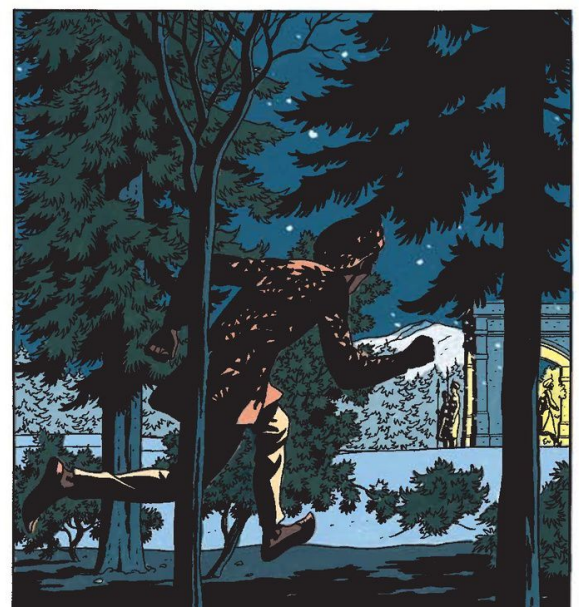
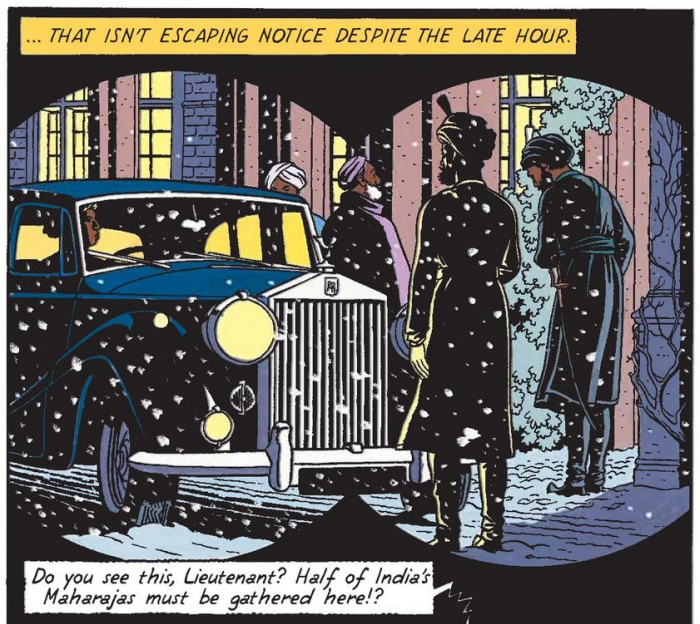
The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 1



The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent Part 2

PROFESSOR MORTIMER'S PAST IN INDIA IS ABOUT TO CATCH UP WITH HIM... IN ANTARCTICA!

Philip Mortimer spent his youth in the land of the Maharajas. He loves India, but his last visit there did not end well. Now, many years later, the famous Professor Mortimer is in charge of the British pavilion at the Brussels Universal Exposition. When strange phenomena begin disrupting preparations, Mortimer and his friend Blake set off on a trail that will take them to the sixth continent — to confront an old and unexpected enemy.



Edgard Félix Pierre Jacobs (1904–1987), better known under his pen name Edgar P. Jacobs, was a comic book creator (writer and artist), born in Brussels, Belgium. It has been said of Jacobs that he didn't remember a time when he hadn't drawn.

Jacobs assisted fellow Belgian Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi) in the recasting of Hergé's *Tintin in the Congo*, *Tintin in America*, *King Ottokar's Sceptre* and *The Blue Lotus* for book publication. He also contributed directly to both the drawing and storylines for the Tintin double-albums *The Secret of the Unicorn/Red Rackham's Treasure* and *The Seven Crystal Balls/Prisoners of the Sun*.

When the comics magazine Tintin was launched on 26th September 1946, it included Jacobs' story *Le secret de l'Espadon* (*The Secret of the Swordfish*). This story would be the first in the Blake and Mortimer series.

The characters of Captain Francis Blake, dashing head of MI5, his friend Professor Philip Mortimer, a nuclear physicist, and their sworn enemy Colonel Olrik became legendary heroes of the 9th art in the long-running series.

After Jacobs' death in 1987, Bob de Moor completed his unfinished last story. In the mid-1990s, the series was continued by the Jacobs Studios with new teams of writers and artists.



ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION		
1	1950	Le secret de l'Espadon, T1
2	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T2
3	1953	Le secret de l'Espadon, T3
4	1954	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T1
5	1955	Le mystère de la Grande Pyramide, T2
6	1956	La marque Jaune
7	1957	L'énigme de l'Atlantide
8	1959	S.O.S. Météores
9	1962	Le piège diabolique
10	1967	L'affaire du collier
11	1971	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T1
12	1990	Les trois formules du professeur Satō, T2 (Jacobs/De Moor)
13	1996	L'affaire Francis Blake (Van Hamme/Benoit)
14	2000	La machination Voronov (Sente/Juillard)
15	2001	L'étrange rendez-vous (Van Hamme/Benoit)
16	2003	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T1 (Sente/Juillard)
17	2004	Les sarcophages du Sixième Continent, T2 (Sente/Juillard)
18	2008	Le sanctuaire du Gondwana (Sente/Juillard)
19	2009	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T1 (Van Hamme/Sterne/De Spiegeleer)
20	2010	La malédiction des 30 deniers, T2 (Van Hamme/Aubin)
21	2012	Le serment des cinq Lords (Sente/Juillard)
22	2013	L'onde Septimus (Dufaux/Aubin/Schröder)
23	2014	Le bâton de Plutarque (Sente/Juillard)
24	2016	Le Testament de William S. (Sente/Juillard)

CINEBOOK EDITION		
15	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 1
16	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 2
17	2013	The Secret of the Swordfish, Part 3
2	2007	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 1
3	2008	The Mystery of the Great Pyramid, Part 2
1	2007	The Yellow "M"
12	2012	Atlantis Mystery
6	2009	S.O.S. Meteors
19	2014	The Time Trap
7	2010	The Affair of the Necklace
22	2016	Professor Satō's Three Formulae, Part 1
23	2016	Professor Satō's Three Formulae, Part 2
4	2008	The Francis Blake Affair
8	2010	The Voronov Plot
5	2009	The Strange Encounter
9	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 1
10	2011	The Sarcophagi of the Sixth Continent, Part 2
11	2011	The Gondwana Shrine
13	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 1
14	2012	The Curse of the 30 Pieces of Silver, Part 2
18	2014	The Oath of the Five Lords
20	2015	The Septimus Wave
21	2015	Plutarch's Staff
24	2016	The Testament of William S.